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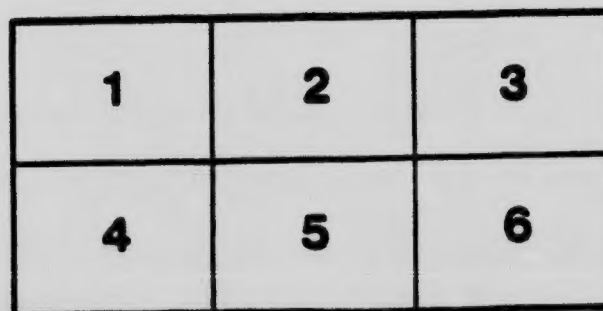
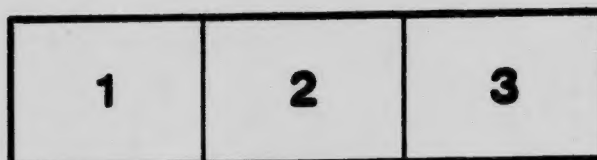
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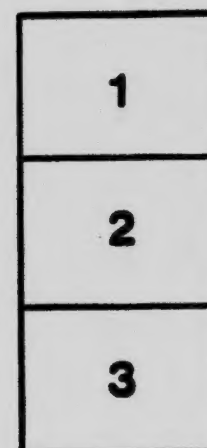
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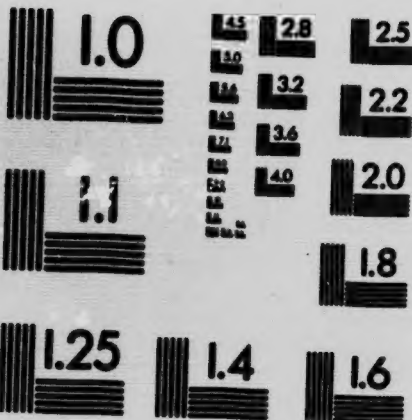
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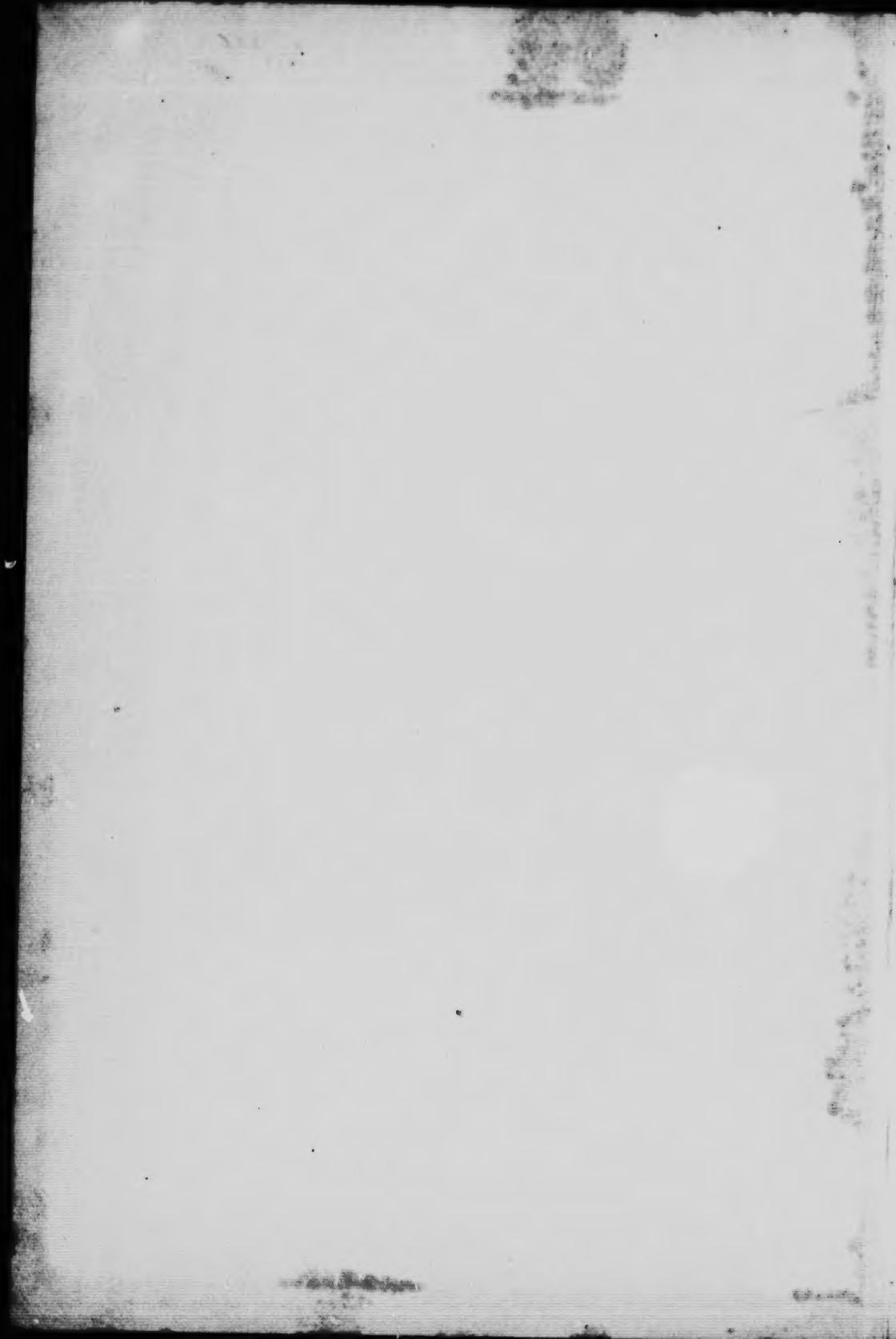
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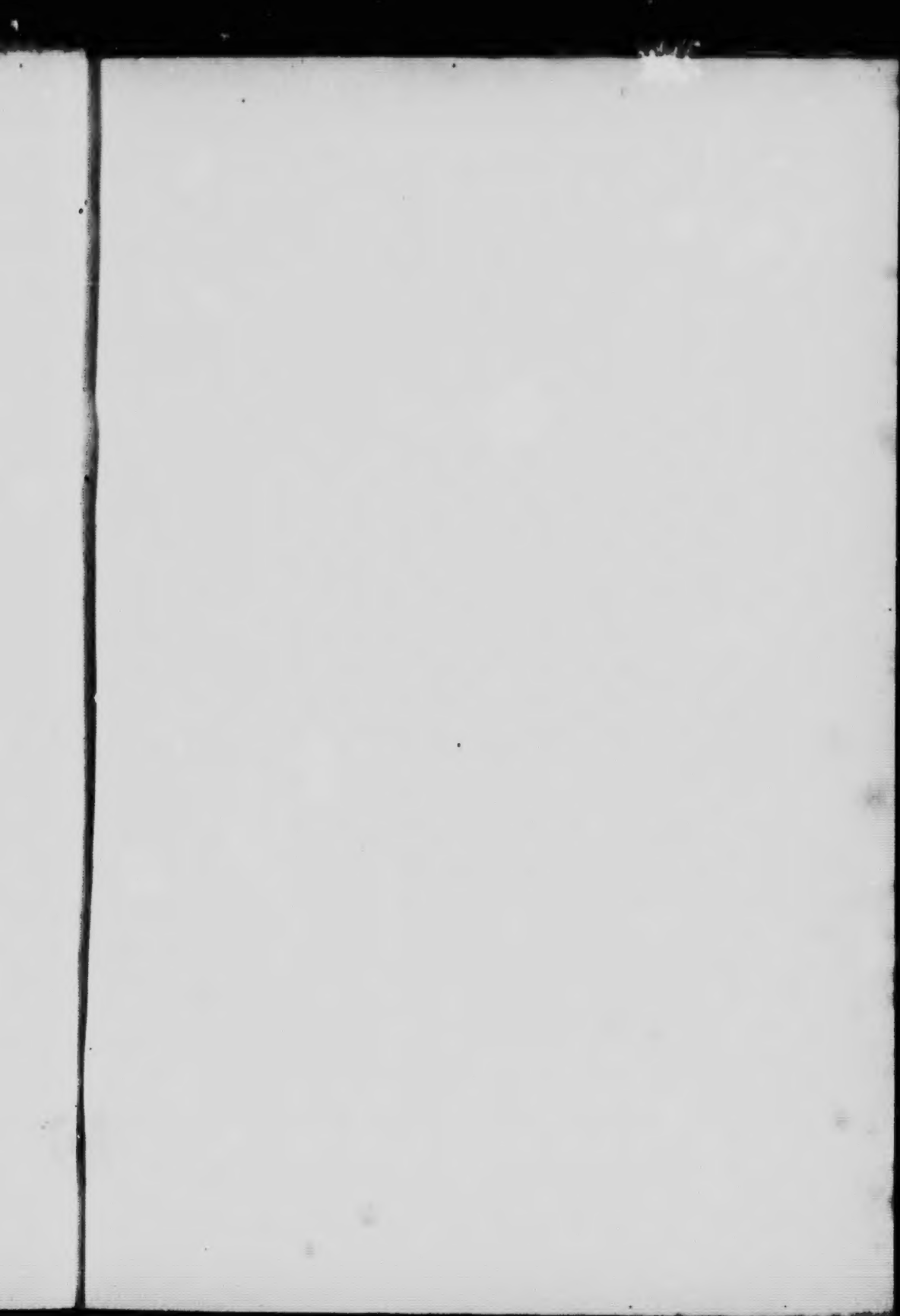
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GRANNIE FOR GRANTED

I

'It's going to be your birthday, grannie,' said Putts one day, and I said undoubtedly it was, because birthdays come to grandmothers with surprising regularity and so quickly, one after the other, as positively to jostle.

'Will you promise to use what I am going to give you, faithfully promise?' he asked.

'Faithfully promise.'

'Even when you don't know what it's going to be?'

'Even when I don't know what it's going to be.'

'And you *don't*?—this anxiously.

'Not in the very least,' I assured him.

'And mine too? Sa-ay yes,' pleaded Bounce, aged four.

'Yours too, Bounce.'

'It's a bwotter!' she shrieked, unable any longer to bear the burden of secrecy.

'There you've been and gone and done it,'

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said Putts in despair. And Bounce, with all the bounce gone out of her, turned her face to the wall and wept bitterly.

‘Grannies being very very old people are nearly always deaf, Bounce my darling,’ I whispered, and that comforted her.

‘Vill you use it? Say yes,’ she sobbed softly.

‘Yes, yes!’

‘Plomise!’

‘I promise. Twice, three times every day.’ And Bounce, having little conception of the short-lived if absorbing joy of blotting-paper, jumped for joy.

‘Sall we play mad bulls *now*,’ she said. ‘Say yes!’ But the matter of presents was still to be discussed.

‘You needn’t use mine, darling,’ said Patricia, which showed her to be older than Putts by at least ten years, and than Bounce by much more than Bounce could count. Putts could count a good long way, and backwards, which accomplishment filled Bounce with envy, awe and sadness. ‘Putts is a kevver boy,’ she once said. ‘He can count one, two, three, four, five, six—Bounce can’t.’

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Well, the birthday came, and with it my doubts were dispelled. Patricia gave me a pen, Bounce a blotter, and Putts a pig with a shamrock leaf in its mouth, which mouth, when widely opened, gave access to a very small ink-bottle. Its existence not the very most astute grandmother in the world would have suspected had it not been (as Bowles, our parlourmaid, reminded me) the exact 'faxismile' of the one he had given me the year before. I did not tell her it was a coincidence which to a grandmother is by no means a remarkable one. I was grateful too for the word *faxismile*. So I said nothing.

From Guy, another grandson, I had the written promise of a present. In a letter he said: *If* I was going to be so *jolly* decent as to send him a pound, like I always did, and would send it by return, instead of on his birthday, which was such a jolly long way off, he would buy me an awfully jolly sort of an air pistole he had seen. It wasn't really a pistole, so I needn't be afraid. But I could squirt things at chaps—ink if I liked—which would be awfully good fun, if I wasn't too old for that sort of thing. And I could lend it to him in the holidays—he promised faithfully

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to give it back. If I didn't like the idea of the pistole I wasn't to bother : but I could order myself something at Harrod's and when he got my pound he would pay me back. Did I see ? Anyhow he wished me a jolly lot of returns.

He added a postscript to say there was a beastly little new boy who cried all day, and whenever he saw a master or the matron he besought them to send him home. He threw himself at their feet—rotten little beast.

I felt Guy's letter required careful answering ; but before setting myself to do it I put on my hat and stepped out into the golden sunshine of the garden. I did not want a hat ; but I put it on because, in honour of the day, it had been retrimmed. The position of the bow constituted the change ; I hoped I might remember from what position to which position it had been shifted on this my birthday. I imagined the bow was meant to look out upon the new year from the exact middle front of my hat, and so I accordingly placed it.

I went straight to that part of the garden where I knew I should find old Speedwell, our gardener. I found him ; busy as usual. With

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every birthday he becomes more bent, dear old man; but his heart must right itself because it always remains where it ought to be. At my coming he raised himself, so far as he was able, to doubt whether the day would last—his old eyes blinking to the sun as he gave utterance to his doubts. There has never been a birthday of mine during the last forty-eight years that Speedwell has trusted to last, yet it comes with June of every year and is invariably fine.

‘It’s my birthday, Speedwell.’

‘Yes, ma’am, it be.’

‘We are getting old, Speedwell.’

‘Yes, ma’am, I shouldn’t be surprised.’

‘My grandchildren have sent me beautiful presents.’

‘Yes, ma’am, they would.’

‘Master Putts has sent me a pig.’

‘Yes, ma’am, he would—well, I wouldn’t have thought for a pig exactly.’

‘Well, it’s really an inkpot and it has a sham-rock leaf in its mouth—the pig I mean.’

‘Yes, ma’am, it would.’

‘Now, Speedwell, why should it?’

‘Well, come to look into it, ma’am, why

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shouldn't it ?—a pig is none too particular, and an Irish pig——'

'And Miss Bounce a blotter,' I added hastily, being half Irish myself.

'That 's good,' he admitted.

'And Miss Patricia a pen.'

'There 's sense in that to such as can use it.'

'And lots of others, Speedwell.'

'So I should say, ma'am.'

Then Speedwell, bending still lower, made diligent search for something between the cool, dark leaves of a plant, and having made out that it was difficult to find, he withdrew from its hiding-place a tight, round, hard bunch of roses. 'And old Speedwell's, ma'am,' he said, tendering it.

'Ah, Speedwell, thank you, thank you, the nicest of all my presents.'

'And the one you least thought to get, ma'am,' said the old man with a twinkle.

'How many does it make ?' I asked, laughing.

'The bookey, ma'am ? the forty-eighth—counting Winthorpe and this foolish Anne's place (this was Speedwell's version of 'Anne's Folly,' the name of our house). Counting the roses,' he continued, 'one thousand four hundred

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and forty—and that pink bud I broke off by carelessness, forty-one. One thousand four hundred and forty-one—and all smellers.'

'Flowers are wonderful things, Speedwell.'

'They be that, ma'am; they take plenty of care, planting, watering and tending—God gives the increase.'

'And you give God the glory?' I suggested.

'Some of it, ma'am.'

Dear old Speedwell. He may be obstinate and pig-headed and dour and difficult, but he is none the less dear for all that, and he rakes out the footsteps of the grandchildren on the newly sown flower-beds, which as a younger man he never did for my children. With age has come understanding, and the heart of a grandmother needs that, for there is very little reason in it and no logic.

I went indoors and I wrote to Guy, thanking him very much for thinking of giving me the 'pistolet,' but said I would rather he spent my present on something for himself, and begged him to be kind to the new little boy, who no doubt was a dear little chap, and devoted to his mother.

Then, in order to test still further the excellence

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of Patricia's pen, the absorbent properties of Bounce's blotter and the blueness of the ink in Putts' bottle, I wrote a long letter to one Jordan Rivers. That it was a letter impossible to send I knew. I knew also that it is not the letters women write that matter, but rather those they post. I had no intention of posting this one. It will be seen at once that it was not a letter I could send to a comparatively young, and almost unknown, bachelor.

'DEAR JORDAN,—You ask me if I remember you tumblin'g downstairs? I have happier recollections of you. Perhaps you remember that I picked you up, that I was kind to you? I make bold enough to believe so, for it would explain, just a little, the depth of the affection you say you feel for me. Otherwise do I deserve it? You hope I am well and happy? I am very well and I am very happy. I have known great sorrow. But the older I grow the more I see that sorrow and happiness go hand in hand all the days of one's life. The happier one is the greater is the sorrow of separation bound to be when the object of our great happiness is taken from us.

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‘ Now, Jordan, to be completely happy a woman can be a wife, may be a mother, but *must* be a grandmother. If she can at the same time fill each capacity she may count herself among the immortals.

‘ If the moment when into the grandmother’s arms is placed her first grandchild lacks the splendour of that sublime moment when at her side was laid her first-born son, it has a glory of its own. If in those long-ago days she had meant to be a good mother, she must have said to her poor, tired little self, “ Please God of this child I shall make a good man.”

‘ But the same good little mother grown to grandmother’s estate, on taking her first grandson into her outstretched arms, whispers exultantly to her beating heart, “ Here is a man-child, let me spoil him ! All I could do I did for his father, now it is my turn to play.” And the grandson, if he be a wise child, will “ goo ” so soon as he is able at his grannie, which “ goo,” once acquired, should adequately express grateful acquiescence and promise of much mutual joy in days to come.

‘ It is well to have a mother. It is wise to have

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a grandmother. It is a sage child who loves his grandmother and takes for granted her love. Grannies like that.

‘ You ask me if I miss Winthorpe ? You ask it so kindly—who said paper neither hesitates nor blushes ?—that I know you know I do. You say you have memories of cool, vast rooms filled with flowers. I have the same. But the rooms to me are filled with the ghosts of other flowers. Against the rose damask curtain in the library I first discovered my Cynthia a beauty. You had discovered it long before, you say ? Well, for all the world says of a mother’s prejudice, a young man, I think, is quicker to see beauty in a girl than is even her mother. She wouldn’t have made you happy, my dear boy. She has become a very smart young woman of the world, and not so young after all. But a mother is slow to see age in her children. Cynthia is a dear child, and has four children of her own as dear. You say it is all right now. Of course, ridiculous boy, it is all right. It must have been all right many another time since.

‘ You say you could not write when Ralph died. I wish you had found the courage. He died

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as he would have chosen. No long, lingering illness was his. Death came mercifully and swiftly. He was ready in the accepted sense of the word—as accepted by our dear old nurse Benny. To say he was willing is another thing; even she would not have said that. He left those he loved, and for longer than I thought it could ever be.

‘There was a time when I hoped death might leave the door ajar. But not now; I am content to wait. I should like to live to see my granddaughter Patricia married. I wish you could see her. My boys are all married except Hugh, and, excepting Claudia, who lives with me, all my daughters.

When I passed for the last time as mistress through the gates of Winthorpe, yes it was bitter; but a strong arm upheld me. My boy felt it as much as I did. His little wife could not have behaved more charmingly. On that score I felt no jealousy, and in that I am most happy.

‘I won’t burden you with news of a family you must have forgotten, but when you come home remember this as your home for as long as you will, and Mary Legraye as an old and affectionate friend.

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'P.S.—By the way, Claudia has a photograph of you on her mantelpiece. I wonder if she found it among the treasures Cynthia left behind.'

I addressed an envelope to His Excellency Colonel Sir James Rivers, K.C.B., etc., in some out-of-the-way, un-get-at-able place in Africa, and, with that hope and confidence that is ever ascendant in the heart of woman, knew that, in due course of time, it would have reached its out-of-the-way destination if I had not prevented the possibility of anything so terrible happening by tearing it up.

I wrote another letter to Jordan Rivers saying I would do what I could in the matter of votes for the candidate in which he was interested, and told him of things I thought might interest him, avoiding all mention of grandchildren, knowing them to be the least interesting of all things even to the most far-sighted bachelor. I then tore up the first letter, and, putting the second one into the envelope, was about to stick it down when Claudia came into the room.

'Happy birthday, darling. Writing?'

I said I had been writing.

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‘Who to?’

‘Sir James Rivers.’

‘Why?’

‘Because he wrote to me asking for my votes for——’

‘You’ve promised them already remember, darling.’ She laughed. ‘It doesn’t matter. It’s your birthday and you shall promise as many votes to as many as you like, but, darling, I hope you haven’t poured out your soul to him?’

‘No, Claudia darling, I have not!’ and I licked the envelope and gave it a vicious little thump with my fist, secretly rejoicing that Claudia knew nothing of the first letter, the fragments of which lay in the wastepaper-basket at my feet.

‘Mummy darling,’ said Claudia, ‘why, if you have this overpowering desire to pour forth, don’t you write a book? It would be an excellent occupation for you. Describe how I tyrannise over you. Describe the Lullingtons and everybody else in the village, and, now that Hugh is going to fall in love with Diana Lullington, there is plenty for you to write about.’

It was rather a good idea. Why shouldn’t I? And, if it only saved me from outpouring where

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I ought not to outpour, what an excellent thing it would be. After writing to Jordan I certainly felt very much better. Perhaps I had discovered the outlet I needed.

Dear Claudia, I am afraid most young people suffer under the garrulousness and want of reserve on the part of their elders. Claudia says it makes her hot all over when I tell a young man in a shop how many sons I have. Now why should it? I have never yet found a young man who wasn't interested, and who hadn't the ready tact to express surprise as well as interest.

Is there anything to be ashamed of in possessing four sons, three daughters and thirteen grandchildren?

'Do you remember Jordan Rivers?' asked Claudia.

I said, 'Not very distinctly.' But with a mental effort I recalled a tall, lanky, serious boy with a capacity for the worship of woman, and a shy reverence for her which prevented him from expressing the depth of the feelings which overcame him. Cynthia teased him. So he went to India and did great things. It is not the man who is best loved who does the most valuable

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work in life. But girls, in their desire to serve their country well, must not forget that there is much in love to be commended, that it makes of men excellent citizens. And after all, those men, who must build more than homes, have other incentives than unrequited love which drive them to the making of empires.

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II

If Patricia had not given me a pen, Bounce a blotter and Putts a pig, I should possibly never have written to Jordan Rivers, and probably my life would have continued its quiet course, gently ordered in all its paths by Claudia ; which paths are herbaceously bordered, on the one side (in summer time) by delphiniums and larkspurs and sweet-williams, and penstemons and Canterbury bells, and lupins and hollyhocks ; by lilies and by everything that should be found in the garden of a really happy old woman : on the other side bordered by lavender hedges, sweetbriar hedges, and by everything of most delicious scent that Londoners grow and smell in their dreams.

Since Claudia has given me permission to write, I shall write of her. That I am an anxiety to her I know. She forgets that I managed many years without her, and that without me she possibly wouldn't have lived to manage any one ; which

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would have been a pity, since she does it exceedingly well and without apparent effort.

She partly manages many things—schools, Sunday and secular; clubs, men's, boys' and girls'; holds meetings, political and social; tells the young men in the village what things they should do, and still more definitely what things they should not do. In the folly of my old age I should have left that to their own good taste and judgment. Claudia calls spades spades and, incidentally, rakes rakes. She belongs to societies which busy themselves, not only with this generation, but about the generations to come. In my young day the generation to come was a thing dreamed of by mothers who were slow to speak of these dreams except in prayer; and since prayer is a thing that comes from the heart and not through the lips, none knew of these prayers. But they were good prayers for all that, and the answers to them the mothers learned to read in the touch of their children's hands, in the purity of their children's hearts, and in the laughter on their children's lips. But I must own Claudia does not compare unfavourably with the young women of my day. There is some-

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thing very splendid and forceful about her, and other qualities softer and gentler will come. And when all that force can do has been done, the muscles of her arms may relax and into the softness of their curves may creep, I hope, little children. But they should be sons, for it is not given to all mothers of sons to be the right mothers to bring up sons. As fearless as the sons must she be who would make them brave, as gentle must they be as she is who would make them strong.

How indignant Claudia would be if she could know of what I am writing. And no doubt she does, for nothing escapes her.

Of my daughters, Cynthia is married happily and well. And my Bettine is married most happily, but not too well, as the world counts happiness, or pretends to think it counts happiness.

Personally, I believe there is no woman so worldly as not to be touched, either with sympathy or envy, at the sight of married lovers.

Ralph, my eldest son, is married and reigns in his father's stead at Winthorpe. He has three children—two like unto himself and a third

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like unto their mother. I could wish them all like her. She, on her part, rejoices in that they resemble Ralph. But she likes me to say I wish they were like her, so I say it and she slips her hand into mine and says 'You darling,' when it is most obviously she who is the darling. Her eyes encourage the world to say please, and are quick to respond with thank you. Her name is Isla and she comes from the west coast of Scotland, and there is the freshness and softness of mists and moors in her eyes, and in her voice the sound of purling waters—especially when she laughs, which she does often and softly. Above everything else she has made me grandmother to Putts. It is an absurd name; but it is mine for him, and his for me is Grannie Patts—just as absurd. I don't suppose any other foolish old woman would even answer to it, unless for reasons of politeness or because she was deaf. Certainly no sane woman would rejoice in it as I do.

There can be few boys like Putts. He has what our old nurse Benny calls 'a way with him.' He says, 'If I was a little clock, Grannie Patts, no one should wind me but you!' It is no use whatever other old women saying they wouldn't

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warm to a compliment so delicately expressed, because I simply shouldn't believe them. Putts laughs just as his mother laughs and for even less reason, and he has her dimples, which, combined with a powdering of freckles on his absurd nose, and eyes set sufficiently wide apart, make him a very attractive little man. I am supposed to spoil him, which supposition no doubt has some foundation; but the stories are added too quickly and are built upon fiction. I have a theory that love spoils no one. But it must be the real thing.

Of girl grandchildren I have many—among them Patricia. If I have a favourite—but I have not! So soon as I think I love Patricia best, up pops a vision of Bounce. So round, so soft, so delicious a thing of four is she, that I could not say I loved any one better. If I did she would frown and frown and frown till she laughed, and when she laughs she laughs till she aches, and then she gasps 'Oh, *pelese* top!' when it rests entirely with her whether I stop or not. She is the youngest daughter of my second son Dick.

Dick has been married just long enough to be possessed of Patricia, and the silly old boy hasn't

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got accustomed to it yet, which in eighteen years he might have done. Besides being father to Patricia he has other business, which takes him to the city every morning. And every evening he comes back to Patricia, in the schoolroom for choice, where in winter she toasts muffins for him while he tells her all he has been doing and saying and thinking during the day. And he imagines Patricia tells him all she has been doing and saying and thinking; but this old grandmother knows she may tell him something of what she has been doing and saying, but very, very little of what she has been thinking, for the very excellent reason that she is eighteen, and at that age thoughts are dreams set to sacred music.

Anna, Dick's wife, has money, and when he married her I remember the mothers of other sons laying their hands on mine and saying in soft voices, punctuated with sighs, 'How lucky he is!' as no doubt he was. Every man must hold himself so who wins the woman he loves. He who continues to love the woman he has won is still luckier.

But I have a suspicion that when Dick looks his tenderest and kindest, it is Patricia who re-

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turns the look with the swift little smile that will win her more than her father's love, and Dick knows that and is beginning to feel jealous of that smile, or rather of the man who shall bring it to Patricia's eyes, for it is with her eyes she smiles best.

Hugh, my youngest son, is unmarried, and occasionally comes back to us for week-ends, at which times Benny becomes deliriously busy. With her I am content to share him. But at night it is she who tucks him up. That reward, for all the nights he kept her awake in years gone by, she has earned.

Without Benny neither Claudia nor I would know when to change from winter to summer underclothes. One might suppose it to depend on our feelings; but it does not. It entirely depends on Benny's, and, in strict accordance with her ideas on the subject, so do I at all events change mine.

Among the many things that bind me to Benny is the memory of the child we loved and lost. Together at his bedside years ago we watched, she and I. As anxiously as I watched she watched, as sleeplessly, as patiently, as hopefully, as prayer-

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fully, with the mother-light in her eyes, the breaking ache in her heart.

When the child left us, it was Benny's strength that upheld me. It was she who bade me look beyond the darkness of this world's night. It was she who, to awaken my dead heart, led me to the bedside of my Bettine, then a baby. It is Benny now who reminds me of a hundred things I have forgotten — words he said, looks he gave, things he thought.

Benny has in her keeping the key of the gates of a world of her own and of that child's. And I imagine that when she comes to the gates of heaven she will find her key fits. To heaven there are many gates, and one master-key fits them all. It is made to the pattern of love and the mould has never been broken, because Nannies are careful people.

None of Benny's earthly keys fit anything. 'But, ma'am,' she says, 'there's always the wardrobe to fall back upon'; which cryptic saying means that once, in a dilemma arising from lost keys, the wardrobe key did fit my box. Benny has ever since then, along with my clothes, put her faith in wardrobes. There is a little of her

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faith in every nook and cranny of our house—and her world.

It is the Bennys of England who are her greatest and most enduring monuments. Is that, perhaps, why there is no corner in Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's for the nurses of England's greatest men? many of whom owe much of their greatness, and their monuments entirely to the teaching of those women who guided and guarded them as children. Perhaps in the hearts of those men were raised monuments to those women, and a true Nannie would rather live in the hearts of those she loved than stand carved in marble before the eyes of thousands to whom she was never known.

For Nannies are shy people. They seldom get beyond the other side of the drawing-room door, and very often no more than a kindly hand appears, and the sound of a voice is heard encouraging the child to go to its own mother. Few Nannies would dare to say, 'She won't hurt you, darling,' but some would like to.

When I told Claudia my little idea about the nurses of England having no monuments raised to them, she, being for the moment of a socialistic

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turn of mind, begged me to remember that most of England's greatest men had had no nurses at all.

'But, Claudia,' I said, 'think of the children no older than themselves who took care of them.'

'Ah! there, mother darling, you defeat your own argument. It is the woman pure and simple, not the nurse!'

So now I keep my little ideas to myself, for of course Claudia is right—a nurse after all is nothing but a woman, and every woman—at heart—a nurse.

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III

I RECEIVED another letter from Guy in answer to mine.

‘Thanks awfully for the pound I quite understand about the pistole besides it’s gone. I’m going to buy a underhand gramophone from a chap, he calls it that because it isn’t bran new. I told him he needn’t but he’d rather. I’ve taken a passing fancy to it, so I’m going to buy it. You can listen to it so that’s fair. You can play it backwards but it isn’t really so good I don’t advise you to only you may if you like. We don’t always want to do the things we may, worse luck. The gramophone is kind of yours.—
Your loving, Guy.

‘P.C.—The homesickling is better, he’s not a bad little beast.

‘P.P.C.—Mr. Barnes has gone all round the world to get fresh air.’

I asked Claudia who Mr. Barnes was, so wise

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a man he seemed, and when Claudia said he was the science master at Guy's school, it struck me that Guy, at nine, might well be able to exist without a science master for a bit. Judging by the experiments boys make at home, a scientist must feel, even more than most men, the want, at times, of fresh air.

'Guy hasn't been asking for things, darling?' said Claudia severely.

'On the contrary, my child, he is offering me the holiday rights of his underhand gramophone, any way I like, backwards or forwards, although he doesn't recommend it backwards.'

'It's all very well mummy mine to try and put me off, but those grandchildren do impose upon you. You must be firm and learn to say "No."'

I firmly believe my Claudia has made out a time-table by which she would have me live my days. I imagine it to be as follows—it amuses me to imagine it as follows:

8 A.M. Rise.

9. Breakfast lightly.

9.30. Read letters.

10.30. Answer letters, saying 'No' to any

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requests made by daughters-in-law and grandchildren, on principle.

11.30-11.40. Drink milk, eat biscuit, or, better still, eat biscuit, drink milk.

11.45. Go into the garden, remembering that it is ten minutes to the gardener's dinner-hour, therefore I must keep off, not only the grass, but everything pertaining to gardens, sick children and church matters.

1-1.30. Rest and read papers.

1.30. Lunch lightly.

2-2.30. Rest and read papers again.

3.30. Drive and pay calls, leaving rice puddings, not where I call, but where I visit—a nice distinction.

5. Tea.

5.30-6.30. Garden, remembering the gardener knows the ages of all my children, their occupations, tastes, the number of my grandchildren, and that he leaves off work at six, and that his wife has rheumatism and needs him to grumble to.

6.30-7.30. Read something *really* worth reading.

8. Dinner.

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9-10.30. Knit for the poor, 1 purl, 1 plain ;
play patience or read something light.

10.30. Bed.

11.30. Lights out. 'No dreaming, darling !'

Does Claudia imagine it is only at night I dream ? Do I keep her time-table ? No. I read my letters at breakfast, I say 'Yes' to nearly everything my grandchildren ask of me, I pop in and out of the garden, I bolt my biscuit or give it to the puppy, and I gulp down my milk. I play patience in the drawer of my writing-table and close the drawer when I hear Claudia coming. I read the newspaper at every odd moment I choose. I find the most frivolous novels really worth reading, just because I am able to imagine myself mother to the authors, which makes all the difference in the world. Let any one try who has the courage and the imagination.

Now that I am old, it is the book of romance that most appeals to me. The hero I would choose is he who fights most duels and always wins ; who loves passionately and wildly, and whose love for a brief moment is spurned, to be returned with fervour at the last. I love to read of couples eloping, of breathless rides in the dead

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of the night, of pursuers close at the heels of the fugitives. I glory in the darkness that saves them, in the light that blinds them. . . .

'Mother, I'm ashamed of you,' says Claudia when, at eleven o'clock at night, she finds me deep in a book of this kind, and taking away the book, she slips a marker between the pages and says, 'To-morrow, darling'; and I bear it because I have always looked at the end long before that, and Claudia goes to bed thinking me much better than I am, and what would most mothers do if most daughters didn't think them that ?

I live in the country in what is called, and rightly called, a small way. To live in a small way, after living in a comparatively big way, you must do several things and live without many.

To begin with—for three men-servants substitute two women. The one of two women will clean boots less well than the one of three men. But she will put foliage with flowers, and for an old woman which is it better to live with, beautifully arranged flowers or well-blackened boots ?

Knowing men, I know which the masculine mind would prefer.

I, on the contrary, choose the well-arranged

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flowers, because, whether the blacking be put on well by a man or indifferently by a woman, it is effectually licked off by the puppy, who busies himself about the matter while I write.

Claudia gently reminds me that, as it happens, the boots are blacked by the odd man. I am in no way discomfited. The odd man owns the puppy's mother, so the puppy has more than ordinary puppy-right to lick off the blacking if he chooses, because its blackness must remind him of his mother. She, on her part, if she remembers him, may plead for her son because she is never far from the boot-hole, and wouldn't have to go out of her way to do it.

I live in that part of the country that is held by my daughters-in-law to be salubrious beyond any other.

Children without grandmothers go to Westgate-on-Sea, and for such there is no place better. I am sometimes assured that grandchildren are never really happy unless with their grannie. And if their wish to be with her should coincide with a desire on the part of their mothers to be in Paris, the grannie should be wise enough to show no surprise. She should be old enough to

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smile the smile that doesn't show. After all, grannies like to be taken for granted. It pleases them vastly to find themselves not too old or too dull to win the confidence of their children's children. They are keenly sensitive to the criticism of young people. They would like to see with young eyes, but in some cases they cannot. Old sight is not young sight, and there are things I, for one, cannot see. I cannot see a baby on its mother's knee through the smoke of its mother's cigarette. It is foolish of me. Behind that cloud of smoke I ought to be able to see clearly just the same love that mothers of another generation felt for their children, for it must be there, since a mother is a mother and a baby a baby for all time. But the smoke brings tears to my eyes and dims them. Pretty young mothers, put out your cigarettes while your babies nestle in your arms, if only to please an old grandmother!

Another thing I cannot see is tenderness in ragging, or chivalry in romping. I know well enough that under the guise adopted by every succeeding generation to cloak that which is most sacred, must lie the tenderness that is the

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only true tie binding husband and wife ; but in tearing the cloak to rags it is possible to tear also the garment of gentleness itself which clothes all true lovers. And it would be a grievous pity to do that, for it is a hard thing to mend that which is torn and, mend it never so neatly, the place will show, for the day must come when the man or woman will hold it up to the light to see how it wears.

Claudia thinks my book must be very dull, which no doubt it is. She says ragging is as old as the hills. 'You absurd mummy, men and women will always flirt !'

That is more than I can stand. 'Flirt, Claudia, of course they will ! I would do it myself,' as indeed most women do, whether they know it or not. It is instinctive—or should be.

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IV

THE name of our house is Anne's Folly, and I love the name almost as well as I love the house. I like to picture the merry Anne—for merry she must have been)—building her house as gaily as a bird builds her nest. What a moss lining is to a bird a bow window must have been to Anne. In spite of a difficult and peppery husband, Anne got her way and her windows.

To some prosaic minds a bow window in itself is a folly, for it cannot be said to be necessary to one's happiness. But Anne perhaps knew that, from the side of a bow window, she would catch a glimpse of her son returning from school quite a second sooner than she would have done had she built dull, flat windows flush with the walls. And that was reason enough.

Anne wore blue ribbons whenever she had the chance, that I know, and a pink rose in her hair on occasions. She had laughing blue eyes, and I can imagine the architect vastly enjoying the

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planning and building of Anne's Folly. For he must have been as joyous a young man as he was a happy builder, and the latter he was without doubt, because Anne's Folly is essentially a happy house—a house that laughs in every corner. And to this day birds hold high holiday in the eaves, and sing of the days when there was room at Anne's Folly for everything that loved and laughed and sang. Anne must have found the peppery husband a trial; but I dare say she managed him, and I like to imagine him softening at moments and paying, without a word, the window tax. Particularly must he have softened when he stood with Anne, in a bow window, watching the going of their boy back to school. At that moment poor Anne must have been in sore need of comfort and distraction.

Claudia doesn't believe it was a son Anne watched from the window.

Properly speaking I should live in the dower-house of Winthorpe. Ralph, with his cheek against mine, held a brief for the glimpse of Winthorpe to be caught in winter, through the bare branches of the trees. It was just that glimpse I had not the courage to catch. 'Please,

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my boy, let me go,' I begged, and he let me go.

If Claudia regrets the dignity that should have clung to her, as squire's sister, in the village, she does not say so. What she has lost in dignity she has gained in authority. Any one at Winthorpe—of any age at all—might have resented being lectured by the young woman they remembered as a long-legged, harum-scarum child.

Here no one would suspect her legs of anything but length. Her footsteps lead her sedately down sober paths of virtue, and they have never strayed from the high road of earnest endeavour.

We have our struggles—she and I—but I love her well enough to be deeply sorry, and not a little ashamed, when I come off victorious, and she, when victorious, feels just the same. She has reason oftener than I have to feel that particular kind of sorrow, and she expresses it so nicely and so honestly that I love her all the more for that spirit of generosity, and for choice would have her win—sometimes.

One lovely summer morning we had a struggle—a momentous one. On the breakfast-table I found a letter from Isla. To say it was a surprise

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would be untrue, because Benny had hinted at a glimpse caught of Mrs. Ralph's handwriting, and I am ashamed to say my prayers, in consequence, had been a little hurried. Not that it shamed me greatly or worried me at all, because the older I grow the more sympathy and kindness and tolerance I attribute to the workings of an All-governing Mind. The older I grow the less narrow, bigoted and hard becomes that God, and that He has a sense of humour He has shown in diversities of ways, most particularly perhaps in making both men and baby donkeys.

Well, I hurried and found the promised letter on the top of a pile of others. Our parlourmaid, so far as she is able to judge, arranges my letters in the order of their acceptability, bills at the bottom. This letter from Isla was to ask if I could have Putts for a few days; principally, it appeared, because Putts was pale. She begged me to say 'No' if I would rather not have him. 'In case you can't, I have said nothing to him about it.'

Putts pale, Putts pink, it was all the same; he must come whenever he wished and for as long as he liked. I left the rest of the letter unread

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and rang the bell with more vehemence than is my habit. When I said I had a telegram to send, our sympathetic Bowles put her best Putts foot forward and brought a form and a pencil.

At this moment came Claudia, fresh and fragrant, in to breakfast. 'Haven't I told you, darling,' she said, 'to eat your breakfast before you read your letters. You are sending a telegram?' she added, closing her hand over mine.

I admitted it, and said hurriedly that it was only to say Putts could come so soon as he liked and for as long as Isla wished.

Claudia put on her most dignified manner—it can be immense, and I sometimes feel how wasted it is in this small village.

'Winthorpe was perfectly healthy when we were children,' she said, skinning the crust from the loaf. She went on to say she imagined I would like her to be perfectly honest with me. Dear child, has she ever been anything but ruthlessly honest with me? 'Well?' I said.

'Well, darling, the position is this. I have told a certain Mr. and Mrs. Brace that they may come and stay for a week or for as long as they like, in fact for as long as is necessary. They are coming

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to recuperate after a year of very strenuous work. Their minds and bodies are worn out. They are greatly interested in a society for the protection of——'

'Of mothers?' I suggested, becoming, I know, bristly and odious.

But why should people do more than they are fit to undertake and then make others uncomfortable when they break down?

Claudia admitted 'of mothers' in a sense—the mothers of the people who in the future would count. 'You see, I cannot disappoint them,' she said kindly.

'Disappoint who?' I wondered;—those babies who were some day to count, or the Braces, who at that moment counted most uncomfortably in my life? The Braces were the expression of Claudia's socialistic tendency which began to develop about that time, and which would have grown into something stronger if Mr. James P. Carter had not uprooted it once for all.

Seeing that the Braces were inevitable, I suggested the big bedroom and the dressing-room. Claudia said they would require four rooms—two for themselves, one for the maid, and another

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for the secretary. There was still room for Putts ; but it appeared Putts would worry them ; they didn't care for children. The end of it was I wrote a telegram saying Putts must come later, and Claudia wrote another. Both were handed folded to Bowles. In silence Claudia and I finished our breakfast. What is it that makes some silences so unbearable ?

Claudia felt this one so much that she got up and left the room, humming as she went—a hymn tune—of all signs most ominous ! A second later she passed the window, her flower-basket on her arm, her scissors twirling on her finger. She had won, and I knew was feeling the pangs of remorse.

A few minutes after Claudia had left the room, and while I was still wondering what excuse I could find to follow her into the garden, Bowles came in to ask if I would kindly read a word for her that she found difficult. It was Claudia's telegram she handed to me. The indistinct word I deciphered easily enough ; less easily I read the rest of the telegram, because my eyes were filled with tears at the generosity and kindliness of my child. She asked the Braces to come at another

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time. Dear, generous Claudia, it was my turn to show a like generosity. I asked Bowles to ask Benny for my garden hat. While Bowles went to ask Benny to do a thing she could perfectly well have done herself—had she cared!—I tore up Claudia's message and wrote another asking the Braces to come by an afternoon train, on the day arranged by Claudia.

Benny brought my hat. I put it on and I went out to the sweet-pea hedge.

'Claudia?' I called.

'Yes!' said a voice from the other side.

'Darling!'

'Silly old mummy mine!'

'Am I a disagreeable, autocratic old lady?'

A hand was thrust through the tangle of flowers. It was wet with the morning dew. I kissed it. So we made it up, and I never told Claudia her beloved Braces were coming. We avoided the subject; but when the day came I put roses in their separate rooms and prayed for strength to bear with them—the Braces I mean.

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V

It is unwise to have secrets from daughters for, on the day on which the Braces were to arrive, Claudia chose to go off at dawn on her bicycle. Perhaps the thought of how different the day might have been was more than she could bear. But I never imagined she would not be home to tea. I hoped and prayed she might be back in time, if only to prevent me from kissing Mrs. Brace. I felt sure she was a woman who would kiss readily and, in my desire to make up to Claudia, I feared I might be over quick to respond. To live near the Lullingtons—our nearest and dearest neighbours—means that kissing becomes more or less of a habit—one quickly acquired and difficult to shake off.

During the afternoon of that fateful day I found Benny wandering about in a state of suppressed excitement. Now, it being my business to fuss, not hers, I told her to go and sit down, and she went.

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Whether she sat down or not, I do not know ; but I did, and, as I looked out on to the view I love, I heard the sound of shuffling feet in the hall, ripples of stifled laughter, and above all, softly expostulating, Benny's voice.

The Braces, playful, was a horror unthought of. Could any friends of Claudia's choosing be so frivolous as these sounded ? Could such gurgles of laughter come from any one interested only in generations to come ?

The drawing-room door opened a few inches and in peeped my Putts.

'Putts !' I exclaimed.

'Well, Grannie Patts,' he said, throwing his arms round my neck, 'I've come. Benny says it's for a surprise for you. Is it one ? A very, very, extra one ?'

'A very extra one, my Puttikins.'

'I like them,' he said softly, leaning against my knee and searching for the treasures he loves, which hang on the long gold chain round my neck. I said it was the nicest surprise I had ever had.

'*Ever* in *all* your life ?'

'Ever in all my life.'

'Wasn't when you married *more* ?'

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‘More of a surprise?’

‘Um,’ said Putts. ‘Nannie said she was more surprised than anything in her life when Mrs. Moss married. She said——’

‘What did she say?’

He hesitated; he was bent on opening a tortoiseshell blob that hangs on my chain and does not open. Putts knows that it isn’t *supposed* to, but thinks it *may* some day if he perseveres. ‘I *almost* forget—anyhow she had some wedding cake. *Only* she didn’t see any one when she put it under her pillow—it didn’t act! Mrs. Moss is ever so old. If a horse was the same sort of oldness, he simply wouldn’t be able to eat or to stand, or do anything, he’d just drop. Well, she’s as old as that. You aren’t!’

At that moment the Braces were announced. Their entry was effected without scuffling. It was an entrance dignified, complacent, patronising and kind.

‘Dear friend—no,’ said Mrs. Brace, holding me at arm’s length, ‘have you never considered the danger that lurks——’

She stopped at the sight of Putts and raised her eyebrows as if he were the first child she had

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ever seen. Her eyebrows seemed to question his right to be there.

‘The view, Henry!’ she said, to distract Henry no doubt from the sight of Putts.

Henry fixed his pince-nez and admitted the beauty of the view; but made me feel that he would like to say if *he* had made it he would have done it better.

‘Doesn’t it give you the feeling,’ he asked from the window, ‘of something unattained?’

As land I admitted it unattainable, because it belonged to the largest landowner in the county; but as a view it was mine.

Mr. Brace murmured, ‘Those landowners, those landowners! Have they no consciences? Keeping the land from the people.’ He paced the room excitedly.

‘And what if the people took the land from the owners?’ I ventured.

There was a pause while he looked at me pityingly over his glasses, from me to his wife, who in her turn smiled—in sorrow and complete understanding—at us both.

To relieve the tension of the situation I told them the story of Putts out hunting, who, after

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galloping through heavy plough, went up to the farmer to whom the land belonged and said, 'I'm afraid I've taken away a good deal of your land on my pony; hope you don't mind!'

My little story was received with chilly silence, and with all my heart I wished for Claudia.

'And you are Claudia's—the spacious Claudia's—the glorious Claudia's mother?' said Mr. Brace, surveying me critically with his head on one side, and his fingers in that position which holds out promise to children of 'Here's a church and here's a steeple.'

'Dear Claudia!' he murmured, 'large-hearted, fettered, feminine creature. If we could only get her out of this!' He waved his arm, denoting as 'this,' I supposed, the smallness of the drawing-room.

I led him out into the garden. 'Surely here,' I thought, 'there is space enough for Claudia.'

'Don't you see,' said Mr. Brace, 'how cramped this is to the soul? How can she expand here?'

I looked to my wooded hills and saw ample room for the expansion of souls. They could aspire to great heights and yet not reach the heavens. But I did not say so.

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‘In a garden weeded by *paid* hands!’ exclaimed Mr. Brace.

Were ever hands more tender than old Speedwell’s, and they had been paid for years. Yet no money could ever repay the kindness I have received at those dear old hands.

‘Why should a man weed *your* garden, dear friend?’ asked Mr. Brace; and I told him he was mistaken, the garden was Speedwell’s, not mine, and any one with an old gardener would say the same and would be only too delighted to admit it.

No Claudia came; but in her stead a telegram to say she was staying the night with neighbours; but not near enough neighbours to reach by telegram at that hour.

Through a long evening the Braces and I sat and talked. Their world was not my world, nor were their ways my ways. They held me up as an example of evil in that I found the world good. Why did I shut my eyes to sin? It was not until I saw it that I should fight against it.

They have over me this advantage, that there must be in their world plenty of scope for that missionary spirit which inspires them to go about doing people good. I suppose it is because I

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live in a small village, close to my little world, that I find it so good. There does not pass a day that I do not hear of some kind, Christian act performed by some one poor and perhaps suffering, to another also poor, also suffering. There does not pass a day that I do not vow to be better because of some example set by some one in my little world.

I could have shown the Braces much that was good, if I could have taken them that night from cottage to cottage, and opened to them some of those doors. In one room, at least, I knew I should find a woman minding a sick child for another woman—sitting up during the night so that the mother might sleep, and in her sleep, forget, and in her awaking, hope.

I found the Braces possessed of an insatiable curiosity. Their interest in their fellow creatures was largely, I think, due to a desire to know all about them. But what was perhaps born of a motive not altogether worthy, led, no doubt, to much that was good and noble. When they had discovered all there was to find out about a person, they set to combat the evil in that person's nature and to nurture the good, and, according

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to their own showing, the souls they had saved were many. But in probing they must often have pained, and they did not spare me.

Among other things, they advised me on the upbringing of Putts—and there lay the sting.

On looking back to the Braces' visit I discover, if I honestly search my grandmotherly heart, that it was their attitude towards my Putts that made me dislike them. I could have forgiven Mr. Brace his hat, and possibly his tie, and perhaps his coming down to breakfast in slippers, if only he had understood, or had tried to understand, the ways of a child, and if he had only once had the gumption to say he thought Putts a fine little chap. Few people omit to do that, and, after all, it's not much to do for an old woman, doddering though she may be. Most people can't help doing it, even if in doing it they perjure their souls, which of course they don't do—because it is true.

In a moment of expansion I took the Braces up to see Putts asleep. As they gazed at a sight to me so beautiful as to be awe-inspiring, they fervently hoped he wasn't suffering from adenoids.

Benny blew out the candle.

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It was the only expression she gave to her feelings, and it was no doubt the safest. I understood it ; but it left the Braces in the dark.

As Benny brushed my hair that night she said, ' We hope, ma'am, you will be brave to the end—we are very proud of you.'

When Claudia returned she was horrified to find the Braces had been left to me to entertain. Had I treated them as they were accustomed to be treated ? I had no idea. That they had not treated me as I was accustomed to be treated, I knew.

Claudia said it was very dear of me to have prepared such a surprise for her, and I quickly said how sweet it was of her to have sent for Putts. She asked how she could have done otherwise, when I looked just as Bramble looks when the kitten drinks his milk. ' You have had your own saucer all your life, darling, and no one else has ever drunk out of it—and no one ever will.'

This seemed to me a gross misrepresentation of fact ; but I did not say so.

On the third day of the Braces' visit came the crisis. Mr. Brace said Putts had been rude to him. He said also that he was sure I would rather

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know. The responsibilities of a grandmother were great; they must not be shirked. Because a grandmother suffers nothing in the getting of a grandchild she ignores all responsibility, treating the whole thing as a joke.

I wished it might be possible for Mr. Brace to have a grandchild—and that quickly.

‘Putts rude?’ I said. ‘I am sure he is very sorry.’

Now Putts was nothing of the kind. His face radiated joy and happiness, and something in life achieved worth doing.

Claudia upheld Mr. Brace. As he went out of the drawing-room, leaving the punishment of Putts to my good taste and judgment, Claudia came in and declared it nothing to do with either. It was absolutely necessary Putts should be punished. His mother deplored the fact that I spoilt him, and had said it made it difficult to allow him to come.

Men, I believe, at moments see red. Old women, I suppose, may, with perfect propriety, see pink. That they do I know; whether it is proper or not that they should, I do not know; propriety is not my goal. That I looked pink

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I have no doubt, because Claudia said, 'Darling mummy, you are too weak with children,' and she laid her hand caressingly on my shoulder.

'Yet I brought you up,' I pleaded.

She admitted it, but said she had been allowed to do things she ought never to have done. Putts therefore must go to bed, for the sins of his aunt, at five o'clock on a summer's afternoon. Such was the verdict, and the sun shone, mind you ! And the birds twittered and the flowers played in the breeze—laughing as they danced to it ; and on the lawn the shadows played ; in the trees squirrels played ; in the lanes school-children played ; and Putts went to bed.

It was left to his honour that, at the stroke of the hour, he should begin preparations. On the stroke, honourable gentleman that he is, he began them. Benny and I watched through the crack of the door. To be accurate I watched, the crack not admitting of more than one eye to it. To Benny behind me I reported progress.

First of all Putts smoothed the counterpane very, very carefully. Then with his little fist he made depressions over its entire surface, at intervals more or less regular. Then in each

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depression he posted a cavalry soldier. This I duly reported to Benny.

On his bed at the foot, against the bars, in full view, he stood the wooden horse (which Benny keeps for grandchildren). When I told Benny he had stood the horse there, she whispered, 'Yes, ma'am, that 's for company,' and I said I knew it; but Benny had got it in first. It is possible a woman less generous would not have believed that I knew for what the horse stood. A beautiful horse it was. It had once had blue stripes round about and beneath it. About the rest of its person had been disposed brass nails. Wherever a horse should have a brass nail a brass nail there had been. But now, to meet the requirements of the new generation, it had been painted by Benny a rich chestnut brown. Added to everything else, and of greater importance than anything else, in a horse as well as in a friend, it had the kindest expression possible—a real Christian face, Benny called it. And to her the horse owed it.

In replacing a black boot-button eye, or a black paper eye, no matter which (for in the exact position of either lies the desired expression),

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Benny was past mistress in the art. She knew exactly how to attain the right amount of Christianity. The eye put a little too much one way, the expression became sinister or evil; too much the other way, almost too seraphic and saintlike or idiotic even for this world's playing. But an everyday, workable, healthy, normal and natural Christianity Benny could attain to a touch, and on this horse she had successfully bestowed it. It beamed tolerance and good-nature.

The horse settled to Putts' satisfaction, he took out of his mouth a bull's-eye and balanced what remained of it on one of the brass knobs of his bedstead. I said 'balanced' to Benny, but she reminded me in a whisper that it would stick of its own accord, which, considering its condition, it did with ease.

Then Putts, reviewing the results of his labours, put his two little hands together in a certain and equivocal position and made a diabolical face at somebody. It was not at the horse, nor at the bull's-eye, nor at the bird that twittered on the window-sill. Then he proceeded to undress. With the exception of reaching one button, whose geographical position was a little remote, there

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was no difficulty attached to the proceeding. A wriggle or two and it was a thing accomplished. The clothes looked nothing as they lay in a small bundle on the floor.

Then Putts proceeded to insert one leg between the sheets, very, very gingerly so as not to upset his army. A general has put his foot into it before now in dealing with his army, but it is doubtful if he can have withdrawn his foot as gingerly as Putts did his leg. He had forgotten something. Benny had two or three guesses. To fold his clothes was one. She was right. He folded them according to his lights. I should not have liked him to fold them better. He would have been less of a boy if he had. Then the leg slowly began its second intrusion, then it came out again—this time to kneel with its fellow at the side of the bed. Putts prayed. The angels must have paused in their ministrations to listen.

‘Prayers, Benny,’ I whispered, and Benny’s apron went to her eyes. The more fervent the prayer, the more curled became Putts’ toes.

When he had finished—he didn’t waste much of the angels’ time—he got into bed, this time

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with success, and sat surveying his treasures. I turned to Benny. 'You've got the draught in your eye, ma'am,' she whispered. 'So have you, Benny,' I answered.

I pushed open the door and went in. I was about to kiss Putts when he gently put me away. 'You're not supposed to kiss me for more than half an hour, Grannie Patts,' he said, 'for two hours I think it was after I whitewashed the pig—a real black pig it was! For two hours mother wouldn't; she never does when I'm naughty. I think it's two hours, p'raps more. Will you pull down the blinds so I can't see, it's so frightfully daylike; and don't listen, Grannie Patts, while I say something.'

I didn't listen and I heard Putts say, 'Beast, beast, beast, so there!' And I felt all the better for it, as Putts must have done. He emerged from under the bedclothes looking much happier. 'Did you hear, Grannie Patts?'

'What do you suppose, Putts?'

'I s'pose Yes—as plain as anything!'

A few nights later Claudia, sitting on my bed, said, 'I'm so glad you understand the Braces at last, mummy—at first you didn't a bit.'

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‘Not a bit, darling,’ I said, agreeing quickly—not with mine adversary, be it understood, but with my own dear, enthusiastic Claudia.

‘They are really most excellent people,’ she said apologetically.

‘Most excellent,’ I admitted without warmth.

‘The kind England wants,’ she added, surveying critically the toes of her pink satin slippers.

That there was something more to come I knew, but Claudia was too loyal to give immediate expression to it.

GRANNIE FOR GRANTED

VI

THE Braces had gone, and all was well with our world—Putts' and mine.

'Grannie Patts,' said he.

'Putts,' said I.

'You *know*,' he said, wrinkling up his nose, as is his habit when he with another shares a secret.

I knew.

'Aren't you jolly glad?'

I nodded.

'Does Aunt Claudia really and truly?'

'Like them?' I suggested.

He nodded.

'Not really and truly, I think. She thought she did.'

'I guessed that.'

'How?'

'By what she said.'

'Who to?' I asked, regardless of grammar.

'Only to herself. Grannie Patts?'

'Yes.'

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‘Miss Cherry is frightfully religious, I should think.’

‘Why? I am sure she is; but why frightfully?’

‘Be-cause—in church she says her prayers inwards, like people do when they eat bull’s-eyes, because it’s a jolly cold feeling, you know.’

Miss Cherry lives in the village and she is very, very religious and very good. I asked Putts if he liked her, knowing quite well that grown-ups have no right to ask of a child such a question.

Putts said he did rather.

‘Not very much?’

‘Oh, yes, *rather*, that means it.’

We were weeding, Putts and I, and our conversation was a little desultory. It was only when he brought an exceedingly fine weed back to my basket that I really knew what he was talking about. I told him so.

‘Well, when it’s something extra specially in-strintin I’ll always come and tell you. . . . I say, Grannie Patts,’ and he knelt to examine a geranium bud, ‘look here—this flower is going to geranium.’ And apparently it was.

Then for some little time I heard the murmur

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of his voice. That he did not think I should find what he was saying extra specially instrintin was evident, because he didn't come for a long time. Perhaps he had no weed worth the journey. At last he came.

'It is funny that, about bein' made a potato— isn't it?' he said.

'What made a potato?' I asked.

'Me,' said Putts; 'at least I could be if I was old enough, and you too—I spect you are already ages ago.'

'Do you mean half a potato?' I asked, thinking of the definition of true lovers and wondering where Putts could have heard it.

'No, a whole one I spec. It comes in the Collick—made a potato, you know!'

'A *partaker*, Putts!' I said, seeing light.

'Isn't it the same?'

'No, darling.'

'Well, I thought it couldn't be the same sort of potato; but there are things that aren't the same that are called the same, aren't there—like, you know!'

'Yes, certainly.'

'Grannie Patts, did God make you?'

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'Yes, darling.'

'And me too?'

'Yes, darling.'

'*Did* He? Well, He did it all right, didn't He?' He looked down at his little brown shoes, worn at the toes.

'I think very well indeed; but why not?' I asked, puzzled.

'Well,' said Putts thoughtfully, 'I should have *thought* He would have been too old for the job—Speedwell says he is too old for *his*, and he can't be so old as God, not nearly.'

'Wait till I come back, Putts,' I said.

'Where are you going?'

I did not say so; but I was going at once to find dear old Speedwell, to discuss with him next year's alterations in the garden. It is the only sure way I know of setting at rest his doubts and fears. When I say, 'Next year, Speedwell, we will do this or that,' he tries not to smile. When I add, 'And after a year or two, we'll do the other,' he gives up the attempt and, with a twinkle in his eye he says, 'If you be spared to us, ma'am, we *will*.'

When I came back to Putts he asked me if I

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thought dogs had souls? It was a delicate question and a ticklish one too, with Bramble sniffing at my boots.

'Well, darling——' I hesitated.

'I think *Bramble* has, because he knows the smell of a prayer-book. He must have, mustn't he?'

I said it was very strong evidence.

'What is?'

'His knowing the smell of a prayer-book.'

'What is knowing the smell of a prayer-book?'

'Evidence.'

'Is evidence a sort of a smell?'

'Putts, we're being very lazy.'

'D'you think so?' he said, surveying the basket critically. There was certainly evidence in the basket of an extreme activity. I saw at least two plants that would not come under the head of weeds in any but a grandmother's garden.

'Grannie Patts, have *you* ever seen God?'

'No, darling.' I did not like to puzzle him by saying I had—in many and very different guises.

'Grannie Patts. . . . Why *ever* didn't you turn round and have a jolly good look at Him when He made you?'

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‘Why didn’t you, Putts?’ I asked weakly.

‘Well . . . you see, darlin’,’ he said, hard put to it, ‘I was thinking about what toys I was going to have for my birthday; at least I expect I was—I always do before my birthday.’

I felt that as a grandmother I had failed horribly in my duty; but as I see no irreverence in anything a child says in innocence, why should I pretend to? On the other hand there was that moral cowardice of which Claudie accuses me, behind which I was even now perhaps taking shelter, so I said bravely, ‘Putts, darling, I don’t think you ought to speak of God and Speedwell as you did just now—as if they were equal, I mean.’

‘Oughtn’t I to? Speedwell wouldn’t mind, would he?’

He didn’t wait for an answer, but asked me if I had a hobby. ‘Daddy’s is shooting, I think, and mummy’s is smelling red roses, and Nannie’s is playing with babies—what’s yours?’

I said I thought it was playing with Putts, and he asked me if that was a joke, and when I said I thought not, he said he didn’t suppose it could be. I asked him hurriedly what he was going to

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do in the afternoon and he said, 'What do you think?' and I said, 'Paddle,' and he said, 'Good guess!' and I felt absurdly pleased.

'D'you mind being alone, Putts?' I asked.

'I've got you and I'm tired of babies. I know there will be more when I get home. There always are. When I went to stay with—I forget who it was, there was. Must people have more babies when their little boy goes away? Anyhow I shall be married and out of the way before they grow up. But must people always have them?'

'No, not always. But I meant did you mind being alone when you were paddling?'

'I don't suppose I shall be. I saw a water rat last time. It plopped in. I saw lots of things—six little ducks. Then Benny comes.'

I asked what Benny did. He said she dried him.

'What else?'

'She tells me stories. Will you?'

'What, now?'

'Please!'

'What about?'

'About those rocks in Scotland—you know!'

'Do I?'

'Yes, cliffs and rocks.'

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‘That look like children’s slates, piled up?’

‘Yes, yes, tell it in a proper sort of way, not for children exactly.’

‘In long, long words you can’t understand?’

‘Yes, I like those and I *do* understand them.’

Putts sat on my knee. ‘Begin! You needn’t say about the sea and the seagulls and the beautiful lights—and all that rot.’

‘Putts! Rot!’

‘Sorry, Grannie Putts. I meant silly sort of things. I want only just about the slates, you know!’

‘Well, Putts, you must understand——’

‘I do; go on.’

‘You won’t let me.’

‘Yes, I will; I am letting you and you won’t. Go on!’

‘Well, Putts, you must understand.’ Putts put a finger to his lips, raised his eyebrows and smiled.

‘You must understand that the cliffs and rocks on that coast of Scotland are of a very curious formation.’

‘I do,’ said Putts, shifting his position, to my greater discomfort.

‘The cliffs look,’ I went on, ‘as if the children

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of thousands and thousands of years ago, when their lessons were over, had laid their slates aside, neatly piling them one upon the other.'

'Every day after lessons?'

'Yes.'

'Did they have *new* slates *every* day?'

'Every day.'

'Go on. Why didn't they sponge them; never mind, go on!'

'Well, if it were possible for the mathematicians——'

'Wise,' whispered Putts, wriggling.

'For the *wise* mathematicians,' I said, corrected.

'Are they always?'

'For the *wise* mathematicians of the present day, or the *wise* school-inspectors of the present day, to look at the sums upon those slates, they might possibly be able to discover the age of those slaty cliffs.'

'How *could* they?' said Putts, beaming.

'Wait!'

'Oh, I forgot! Go on.'

'But let the *wise* mathematicians of the present day remember that the children of those long-ago days calculated——'

GRANNIE FOR GRANTED

‘ Cal-cu-la-ted ? ’

‘ Yes, calculated, in cormorants.’

‘ *Cormorants ?* ’

‘ Yes, in cormorants, not figures. Added up in haddocks, and subtracted whiting from cod.’

Putts drew a deep breath. ‘ *How* did they ? ’

‘ Well, you see, they can’t get at the slates. I said, *If* the mathematicians could, they would know.’

‘ Not the top ones, couldn’t they ? Are they too high ? ’

‘ No ; although they are very high, they might reach them ; but if they did they couldn’t read the sums on the top slates, because the sea has washed them all away.’

‘ And can’t the very strong men get at the underneath ones ? ’

‘ Not the strongest man in the world, nor the wisest mathematicians in the world.’

Putts wriggled. ‘ I like that ! Mustn’t they have been pretty sums, made of birds and fishes and not stupid figures ? Could you catch the fish after you had done adding them up ? *Could you*, Grannie Patts, just draw me what you think those sums looked like ? ’

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I said I would try, and Putts ran to fetch pencil and paper.

I found it fairly easy to calculate in cormorants, so far as multiplication went. I did it in the old, old way. I began with two cormorants. Subtracting whiting from cod presented greater difficulties. But the cormorants multiplied so quickly that I used up all the paper and pleaded fatigue, not without excuse.

‘Will you tell me it all again?’ begged Putts. How did they subtract whiting from cod?’

‘By taking them away.’

‘Wouldn’t the cod *mind*? Were they real slates? I wish they could be. *Could* they?’

Putts sighed. If the wise mathematicians of the day could measure that sigh, it wouldn’t give them the slightest idea of the height of Putts; but if they were very, very wise, they might, by its depth, arrive fairly easily at his probable age.

As I finished the story Claudia joined us. ‘When I passed just now,’ she said, ‘I heard you say something about inspectors. There was one here to-day, at the school. He said to the children, “Can any child say the Lord’s Prayer?”’

‘Tommy Smallpiece put out his hand.

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“Well,” said the inspector, “you look more intelligent than the rest, can you say it?”

“The Lord’s Prayer,” said Tommy triumphantly.

‘Did the man laugh, Claudia?’ I asked.

‘No, he wasn’t quite so wise as that.’

‘Why wasn’t he?’ said Putts.

GRANNIE FOR GRANTED

VII

IN order to live at peace with one's neighbours, in a village, one must be possessed among other things of a soul above the feeling of petty jealousy, and, as few of us are so blessed, the problem may at times become a difficult one.

In every community, however small, there are many who, if called upon to perform some supreme act of self-sacrifice, would do it willingly and heroically; but ask the same hero to bear with equanimity the sight of a neighbour's garden gate painted a prettier green than his, and it would not be within his power to do it.

The particular green of another's green gate is the very colour of jealousy itself.

When the Lullingtons' gate was repainted, we made no effort to conceal our mortification, but straightway saw revealed, in all its bareness, the shabbiness of our own gate, and, while the Lullingtons' was still wet, we set about to have our own repainted.

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In every case Bentover—painter, plumber and bellringer to the village—was most particularly told *not* to copy the Lullingtons' green, and in every case he did not copy the green ; which was so unlike his usual intelligence in carrying out our orders that it was voted inexplicable as well as inexcusable. He might, at least, have done it by mistake and explained it away afterwards, or have left the gate-owners to do it. We were prepared, no doubt. Then transpired the truth, which proved stranger than fiction. The colour of the Lullingtons' gate had been arrived at purely by accident—the accident being the upsetting of the contents of one paint-pot into another. At the critical moment Don't Lullington came along and, finding Bentover distraught, told him not to worry, and to make him happier she gave the mixture a stir, and the immediate result was the most beautiful green imaginable.

Bentover, under pressure, tried to do it again, upsetting first one pot into the other, then the other into the one ; but to no good purpose.

Don't even went so far as to give it a stir ; but even that magnanimous act on her part had no effect. The Lullingtons' gate remained like its

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owners—different to anything else in our little world.

The swearing of the greens in the village so upset Bentover, not only as painter but as bell-ringer, that on the Sunday morning following the paint accident, he rang the last church bell—which should be the ‘tum tum’ bell—second, and those of us with weak hearts arrived more than usually breathless in church and much too early. But, as Don’t said afterwards, we had plenty of time to recover by the ‘Venite,’ which, of course, we had.

One Sunday when Putts was with me I was not well enough to go to church, so I asked him to pray for me. ‘Pray for you, Grannie Patts?’ he said, ‘*well*, what with kneeling down and getting up again and all the other things there are to do in church, there isn’t *much* time to *pray*.’

I have often wondered what children do when they seem to pray so earnestly. I remember Putts saying his prayers one day at great length, and every now and then he murmured, ‘Vat’s a very nice one—yes, I’ll have vat one, fank you.’ I asked him what he was doing, and he said he was choosing carpets. Let any grown-up who

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likes to try, press his eyeballs and see what lovely colours come. No Persian rugs could have colours more beautiful and varied.

When Putts was very small he was taken to church, as a great treat, and when the clergyman said, 'Let us pray,' Putts said, 'Oh, *do* let 's !'

How he must have longed to play, poor mite.

People who live in large houses never, I imagine, go out to spend the evening with their goloshes. This is not quite rightly expressed, but it is what Claudia accuses me of doing. It was a form of gaiety new to me when I came to live in a village, and I find it very pleasant.

The Lullingtons, for whom I principally don goloshes by night, I love. Another of the delights of living in a small house is that the inmates of other small houses invite one to walk in unannounced. No one so walked in to Winthorpe ; neither did I when living at Winthorpe walk into other people's houses unannounced.

I cannot say I liked it 'all at once,' as children say. It took time to grow accustomed to the privilege. Now it is one of my many privileges in life to lift the latch of the Lullingtons' door and walk in.

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The first time I did it was soon after I knew them. They had earnestly begged me to do it, saying it was a test of true friendship. So I did it. I walked into the drawing-room which I supposed to be empty, until upon my ears broke the sound of a stifled voice. It came from the back drawing-room. It was a young voice strangled by emotion and it said, 'Nobody loves me—I am spurned upon—I am the refuse of the family!'

Now this was a sufficiently surprising thing to hear in the drawing-room of a house in a quiet country village, where I had been led to believe that we all loved one another and did unto others, sometimes, as we would expect others to do unto us, and I felt an immense desire to rush in and comfort that spurned-upon child. It must be so awful to be the refuse of a family and to know it! But there was surer comfort nearer at hand. Another voice nearly as strangled said, 'God loves you; I love you!' and then in chorus both voices, no longer strangled, broke into 'Boo-hoo, boo-hoo!'

I slipped out. It was no place for me. But the first speaker I knew to be Don't Lullington

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and the second Do; the patient, long-suffering Do, who remembered to feed the rabbits when every one else forgot, and who from early dawn to late at night ran messages for the whole family.

In those days Don't was eight and longing to be misunderstood. She is now seventeen and has given up all idea of it. She is so downright, so honest, so uncompromising that it is difficult not to understand her. She leaves little margin for misconception. She is a dear, impulsive, impetuous, generous-hearted creature, and her gaiety is one of the things that lure me to the Lullingtons. Another lure as strong is Mrs. Lullington.

Now that Do is growing up he wishes the name Do dropped. He is even more sanguine than most of the Lullingtons if he thinks that possible. A nickname clings closer than another, and I imagine till the end of his days it will be Do and Don't.

It was the day after Putts had gone and Diana Lullington had come home 'for good' (as the children say), that I lifted the latch of the Lullingtons' door and walked in.

'And Putts has gone,' said Mrs. Lullington,

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after we had compared gardening notes, and were sitting down ready to enjoy what Don't calls a prose.

I said Putts had gone.

'He's a dear little man,' said Mrs. Lullington, picking up a stitch. She was knitting; she is always knitting. 'Isn't he? I mean, prejudice apart, he really is.'

I laughed. However, it seemed hardly worth while with Mrs. Lullington to be reserved, and to affect an indifference I didn't feel, and that she knew I didn't feel; so quite simply I told her all about Putts. She might never have heard it before, she was so interested and occasionally so surprised. 'And you start on your visits very soon?' she asked.

I said, very soon.

'First to your Bettine?'

'First to my Bettine.'

'Then to Mr. Dick?'

'Yes, then to Dick.'

Dick led by a direct route to Patricia. Mrs. Lullington knows well the line of country. I told her a good deal about Patricia, and she said anything I told her she could well believe, adding,

. GRANNIE FOR GRANTED

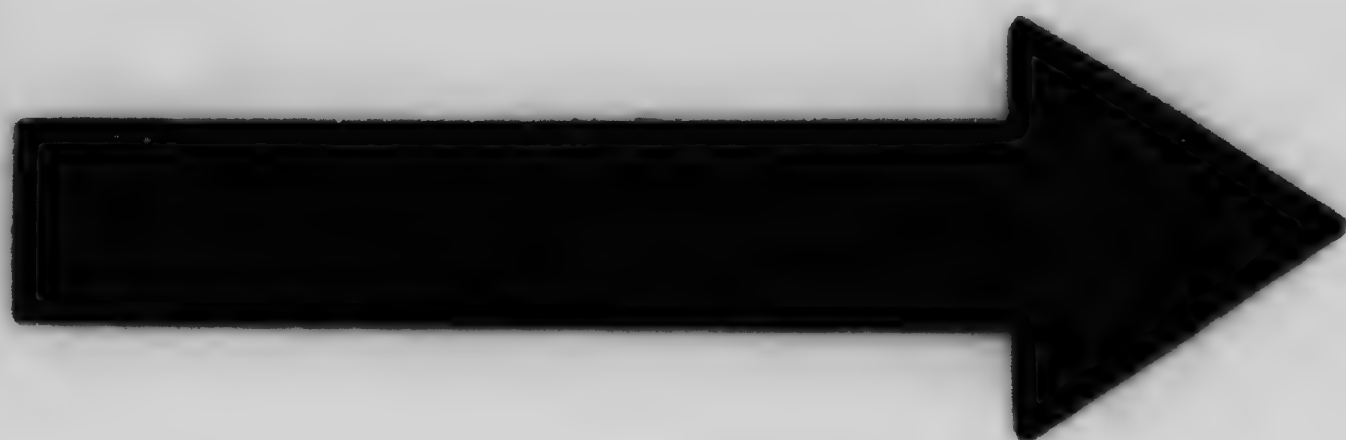
'I met her last time she came down to see you, and I told my Don't how I wished she had manners as charming.'

This gave me the opportunity to talk of Mrs. Lullington's children, and I said so many nice things of Don't that I hardly left time to say how pretty Diana was looking, and I had come for the express purpose of saying it. If you want to say something nice about a woman's children, say it before she does. It will carry far more weight than mere acquiescence, however fervent.

Mrs. Lullington said it was so nice of me to say so. It was no use denying it—Diana *was* very pretty. I asked her why she should think of denying it? And she assured me *only* because it was an absurd affectation expected of mothers. At the beginning of every new year she made a solemn vow not to tell any one that her children were charming, or pretty, or clever, or anything that would prejudice them in the eyes of other mothers.

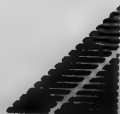
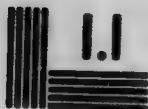
Respecting her reticence, I asked her how long she was able to keep her vow, and she said, '*Sometimes* until I meet you.'

'And that you do every day?'



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‘I am glad to say I do.’

It will be seen that Mrs. Lullington and I are a great comfort one to the other.

‘Now tell me about Claudia,’ she said. ‘I noticed her new hat on Sunday.’

I said I believed it was the old one turned inside out.

‘Ah! Don’t said it was. How pleased she will be!’

And I thought how pleased Claudia would be. Claudia has never got quite accustomed to the intimacy of village life, and vows the past of a hat concerns its owner alone.

These conversations, though dull to others, interest us and are quite harmless.

Soon after Diana Lullington came home, Hugh apparently began to lose a popularity which I had sometimes felt to be too firmly established to suit a mother’s week-end point of view. Whether it was that the doors of those country houses, which had for some years been open to him, were now closed, or whether his eyes, older and wiser, had awakened to the beauties of a quiet country village that he had hitherto found tame, I cannot tell. From defending the girl of the

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present day with a very creditable warmth, he began to find her too emancipated, too easy-going, too noisy, too many other things. He began to talk of simplicity in women, a thing he had never before, so far as I knew, looked for, or assuredly he might have found it. He began to talk of marrying to please me. He went farther than that. He vowed our golf course was quite good, even sporting; the service in church just what he liked. He said he thought it only decent that a man should set an example in the village by going to church. Didn't Claudia think so? After that question, Claudia grew younger and more frivolous than I had seen her for years. Joy danced in her eyes and she winked at me. It was not until one Sunday in church that I understood the wink and couldn't then wink back.

I had just intercepted a look sent from the eyes of Hugh to the heart of Diana Lullington. Diana could not have seen the look with her eyes because they were fixed intently on the east window, and yet I knew that she knew that a message had winged its way from a pew in the nave to another in the chancel. And the message in passing had brushed, with the tip of its wing,

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a mother's heart, and the mother knew that her last son was to be taken away. And the manner of his going would be as the going of his brothers before him. She knew the formula by heart, as must every mother know it who has married sons. It is only when the son meets the woman he means to marry that the mother learns that the child who knelt to pray at her knee never until now knew even the meaning of prayer; that until now religion had been to him a thing unreal, intangible, meaningless! The mother knows that at the end of it all the son will 'remember,' and will put his arms round her neck and will say he hopes she will be as good a wife as *she* has been a mother. And the mother knows it is just those arms around her that become lifting wings to carry her to those heights from which, with her son, she may look away to the promised land. And she must look with him and see with his eyes, or she will never journey with him in that land; and journey with him she must, for there may be times when the road becomes rough for young feet to tread and the way dark. Then it may be that the mother, who has already trodden the road, may be permitted to carry the lantern, and, if she is allowed

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to do that, she will not ask more of her son's wife— if she be a wise mother. And if she is not wise by the time her son marries, she will never be wise. There remains for her the refuge of kindness, which may be misunderstood; but that need not be her fault.

All this came to pass in due time, but not quite in the way I had expected, and not until after Mr. James P. Carter had been, and I had paid my visits to my married children.

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VIII

MR. JAMES P. CARTER gave us due warning of his coming. His coming could not have been a greater surprise than his letter was. Our dear old postman had brought bombs to our door before ; but none that exploded with quite such effect. I should have thought Claudia, with her initiating friendship for the Braces, would have looked at it differently. But it is strange how theories melt away under the searching light of everyday life. Claudia received the letter at breakfast. That the reading of it disturbed her I could see. That it concerned neither her clubs, nor her garden, nor her politics, nor her boys, nor her men, I guessed from the frown of perplexity on her face as she read it. There were no circumstances under which she could not manage men in general. This letter was from one man in particular. As a man he might have been more particular, it seemed, or less. My outstretched hand was ready and aching before Claudia placed

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within it the letter that she had read and re-read.
I now read it.

‘MISS LEGRAYE,—It has taken me years to summon up courage to do what I am about to do. My impulse, under ordinary circumstances, would be to ask if you remember me. I can only ask you to forget me. That’s easy enough, you say! Well, that is the attitude of mind in which I hope to find you. But I am going to ask a great deal of you. If you have forgotten the boy I was, I want you to think of the man whose ideal you have been all these years back. What that man has done, he has done because of you. What he has become, he has become because of you. If years ago any one had told me I should, one day, do what I am now going to do, I should have killed him right away for his presumption. I was James Carter then, I am James P. Carter now. If I had been certain you had forgotten James Carter, I should have written you years ago, asking if I might call and see you. I ask it now. I would be as ready to lick your boots now as I was ready in days gone by to clean them. They were the smallest of the whole family’s,

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in proportion to your size. You *must* remember that you gave me plaster for my finger when I cut it, and, to make sure, you bound it up with a bit of your doll's dress ? I shall be in London by the time this reaches you. A line to James P. Carter, the Ritz Hotel, will find me.'

I handed the letter back to Claudia. 'It has been to Winthorpe, of course,' I said, and Claudia asked me if the man was mad ? Was it a proposal ? How dared he !

'One moment,' I said. I opened the *Morning Post*, at which a moment before I had glanced, and put my finger on the reported arrival, at the Ritz, of Mr. James P. Carter. When an Englishman arrives at an hotel it is unusual to give the exact amount of his income. I should imagine, as a rule, he made some effort to conceal it ; but Mr. James P. Carter's income and entire fortune was given, and how he had made it, and how he best liked to spend it.

'I remember him,' said Claudia hotly, 'a little boy with sticking-out ears.'

'Which gave him a look of alert intelligence,' I suggested.

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‘Mother! you with your conservative ideas I should have thought would have been furious.’

‘You with your radical ones I should have thought might have been at least touched.’

‘The Carters at the Red Farm!’ fumed Claudia.

‘They have been at the Red Farm as long as the Legrayes have been at Winthorpe.’

‘My children cousins of their children’s children!’

I laughed. ‘Their grandchildren in fact. What will the Braces say?’

‘The Braces! What do they know about the traditions of a family? He never—never used his dressing-room!’

‘It was out! I had known there was something

‘... shall I say to James, mother?’

‘He was ‘James,’ just as he had been as a little boy. He could never be anything else.

‘I should thank him for his letter. It’s a nice letter.’

‘Mother,’ said Claudia, ‘I believe you would be quite happy if I married James!’

‘My darling, I shall only be happy when you

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marry the man you love. I cannot give you up to any other. But we must be sincere. If we accept hospitality from people, we must be prepared to let our daughters marry them.'

'But,' expostulated Claudia, 'I haven't the slightest idea of accepting hospitality from James.'

I reminded her there were many Jameses in the world of society.

'But,' said Claudia, 'they haven't been the boot-boys of the particular people they entertain.'

It was a difficulty certainly; but I liked Claudia's little socialisms brought home to her door. In this case they seemed to be laid at her very feet, and most appropriately by a boot-boy. Who better?

For a day or two Claudia was irritable. She snapped at her old mother, and the old mother understood and didn't mind. At the end of two or three days Claudia became herself again, and she and I sat in the garden talking of many things, among others of James, and Claudia confessed to finding something profoundly moving in the man's proposal—if proposal it were.

I had found it so from the first; but Claudia held it her discovery, and rated me kindly for the

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want of width, breadth, and charity even, in my character.

Having told me that I had for some time felt and known, she left me, saying she would be back to tea, which we must have in the garden. Left alone, I may have gone to sleep. I certainly seemed to awake to see Benny in the distance emerge from the kitchen garden, talking as she walked to a tall man in whose bearing there was great dignity. That he was no relation of Benny's nor a friend of the servants I could see; but that Benny was lecturing him was evident, and he was listening with bent head, his attitude admirable! He revered dear Benny. I saw him consult his watch. He was about to go. Curiosity compelled me to keep him. I beckoned to Benny, who with hurried step came across the lawn. 'Who is that?' I asked.

'James he was once, ma'am,' said Benny, flushing.

'Now Mr. James P. Carter?' I asked. 'Say I should like to see him.'

Benny went and spoke to him, and James P. Carter, baring his head, made his way towards me over the lawn.

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What would Claudia have said ? There were tears in my eyes.

‘ Mr. Carter ? ’ I said, holding out my hand.

‘ James Carter, ma’am,’ he said, taking it.

I asked him to sit down. He sat down.

My first thought on seeing him cross the lawn was, how dared he propose to marry my daughter ? My second thoughts, how perfectly natural it was that he should ask for anything he wanted and how right that he should get it, in any case but in that of Claudia, of course.

‘ You know I wrote Miss Legraye ? ’ he asked.

‘ My daughter and I have no secrets,’ I answered gently.

‘ Then you know she told me not to come—well, I just had to ! It was great presumption on my part.’

‘ You would not think it so in the country from which you come ? Would you ? ’

‘ Without the lady’s permission, yes, I think so. It would take courage. But I just had to.’

He leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, and, clasping his hands, said in a low voice, pleasantly modulated, ‘ Where I come from a man is taken for what he is. The race is to the

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strong man. 'There's no dishonesty in poverty, there's no disgrace in riches.' He stopped and, looking round him, said, 'I was at Winthorpe the other day. It was wonderful to be there again; I found my old father and mother, at the Red Farm, sitting in the garden under the apple-tree, just as they used to sit. They gave me a wonderful welcome. They gave me what no money can buy. The whole village did that. I was not James P. Carter, I was Jimmy. I had forgotten it all. If I had not done so I would not have ventured to write Miss Legraye as I wrote. I had forgotten the England I had left, although I was not aware of it. If you had asked me, I should have said there was nothing I did not remember; but I had forgotten the "keep off the grass" kind of feeling. And I didn't feel it until I passed through the gates of Winthorpe. It was then James P. Carter crumpled up and became Jimmy Carter, with a clean collar on and a face well washed. It came back to me then what Winthorpe had meant to that Jimmy. It brought back the feeling of the Sunday afternoon in summer time. There's no feeling quite like it. It's so quiet, so peaceful—so curiously

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English. The gardeners at Winthorpe were strange to me. They showed me around. It is all just as it was. Nothing changes much with things already centuries old. There was a cute little boy——'

'Putta,' I said.

'Yes, that was the name. He was very much what Master Hugh used to be. We made friends. He turned out his pockets for me.' The man's voice grew soft and his eyes smiled as he spoke of the child.

'And England seems small to you?' I suggested.

'Yes, it's small. It's like a wonderful jewel, it wouldn't look so precious if there was more of it.'

'And where do you live?' I asked.

Mr. James P. Carter said very modestly where he lived. He lived, it seemed, in many places. He had a palace, I supposed, in New York; a villa at Newport; a farm in the mountains; an estate out West. He did not say so, but I guessed it.

I was so interested in the man that I was strung up to the point of high tension, when across

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the lawn came Claudia, cool, calm and composed ; much more so than her old mother. Mr. Carter rose to meet her.

‘ Well, James ! ’ she said. She held out her hand. Reverently he took it, and at her command he sat down. He might have been one of her choir-boys, as easily one of her Christian young men. In silence he looked at her, drinking in with his eyes, it seemed, the beauty of which in his heart he had dreamed. Yet old Speedwell, who knows her best, says she ’s ‘ no beauty, but so powerful sensible.’

‘ And your father and mother still live at the Red Farm ? ’ said Claudia, her voice suggesting criticism and slight censure.

‘ They live there,’ said James gently. (A less gentle man would have resented the question so spoken.) ‘ To have taken them from their soil, even some years ago, would have been transplanting them too late. We Carters must be uprooted fairly young to survive it, for our roots go deep. I left them in their home at their particular desire ; but what anxiety was within my power to remove from their lives I have removed. The life they live is the life they love.

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They are no longer dependent on harvests. They have some one to wrestle with Providence, so to speak, when necessary. My mother——'

'I know they are very comfortable,' said Claudia flushing. 'Of course your mother, being accustomed to work, would feel lonely without it.'

'That's just it—lonely without it—that's exactly the position. And my father! The man who has handled a spade all his life can't straighten his hand in his old age. But I must tell you about the house in which my mother is happy, and can still work—if she chooses. The chimneys, for one thing, no longer smoke. The old people have as much wood as they can burn, and that is a luxury to the man who has been careful of his logs—my father is still that. He keeps one in hiding, under his chair, out of my mother's reach; for he says she takes to waste easier than he does. I say women adapt themselves more easily to circumstances. The windows are still mullioned windows; but they let in no draught. The four-post beds remain; but the mattresses are as good as can be bought. The linen is not so fine that my mother can't see to mend a hole, should one come. The furniture is old English as it

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always was, and beautiful as it always was ; each piece a mirror. The oak stairs would have no carpets were I ten times as rich as I am. Nor would the cows' milk be richer, nor the cream thicker. I have perhaps been a tyrant in some things. Being an American—I call myself one now and am proud to do so—I have pleaded that the old home should remain English and purely of the right date. It is the model of an old English home. It is what an old farmhouse might still be, if England were what she were ; but as England changes, so must her homes change.'

Then James Carter asked Claudia if she remembered scolding him for singing 'Nearer Rome' in church. She said she didn't.

'But you must *surely*,' he insisted gently. 'I have never forgotten it, and for the chance of proving it, I have been a regular church-goer ever since.'

But nothing would soften Claudia. To the end of the visit James Carter was James. Her socialistic mind couldn't forget that he had blacked *her* boots. If he had blacked some one else's in a neighbouring county how proud she would have been of Mr. James P. Carter ! How

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resentful if that county had failed to do him honour.

The village fly bore Mr. Carter away from our gate. Rumour has it that at the bottom of the lane he stepped from the fly into the most magnificent Rolls Royce limousine that had ever been seen our way. The glory of its fittings were sung by Rumour to Benny, who in her turn sang them to Claudia, adding for herself this—

‘I dare say he cleaned my boots. He was a wonderfully willing boy.’

A few days later I heard from Isla. She wrote full of the praises of a very rich American who had been to see Winthorpe. She said: ‘With the intelligence common to Americans, he showed the profoundest interest in everything. Nothing escaped him. Even the place where the boots are cleaned he carefully examined. Of course it is a dear old place with a vaulted roof, and once sheltered fugitive Royalists; but not one Englishman in a hundred ever stops to look at the place, whereas the American could hardly tear himself away.’

‘You must tell Isla,’ said Claudia, ‘if you *must* tell her about James at all, that he wasn’t an

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ordinary boot-boy. He came to Winthorpe with the express object of making a little money in order to pursue his studies at night-schools or something—you must remember that, mother. He's quite a gentleman.'

'It was not in Mr. James P. Carter, my child,' I said, 'that I found a lack of gentleness.'

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IX

CLAUDIA went to London. She chose the most worldly, the richest, and the most fashionable of her friends to stay with. For the moment she had done with the James Carters and the Braces of this world.

But the things we have done with have a way of cropping up again in our very footsteps. A few days after Claudia left, she wrote. It was not a long letter. It was written at night; she was alone. She was glad to be alone. She was writing in her friend's drawing-room overlooking the Green Park. It was a beautiful summer night. The lights of London were moons and stars hanging in a blue veil of mist. She felt sorry for Helen having to go to a party on such a night. Then came the confession.—‘Mother, darling, I am not staying at home because I am tired, or because my frock won't do, or because it is hot, or because I am lazy. I am staying at home because the party is given by James, and it

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is to outshine any party of its kind ever given. The whole of the best part of London society is flocking to it. The carriages and cars come right past the door, and away as far as one can see they stretch. I hear nothing but good of James P. Carter. I vowed, snob that I am, not to tell any one what he used to be, and I find it is the only boast he makes. The only one! Mother, why did I persist in calling him James? It was odious of me! I am going yachting with the Martins to-morrow. Anna begs and implores me to introduce James to Patricia. I absolutely refuse. So does Patricia; she insists on going to you. Anna is ranting about it.' Anna wrote saying :

'DEAR GRANNIE,—Patricia against my wishes goes to you to-morrow. She and her maid will arrive at 3.30. Don't let Benny distract Peters from work that must be done. Benny must remember that hers is a privileged position. She is not what any one else would call a maid at all. It is such an expense dressing Patricia, I cannot get her underclothes made out, and she will have them so ridiculously fine. Dick encourages her. I cannot imagine why. I have an innate distrust

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of very beautiful underclothes, I don't know why, and if I did I suppose I couldn't tell Patricia. She has a habit of opening her eyes wider and wider at me, which infuriates me. If she would do it to young men it would be another thing. But with the exception of the one, she won't take any notice of them. She is ridiculously standoffish! Dear Grannie, I am very unhappy about young Forres. Why in the world should men do uncomfortable things they needn't really do, and then pose as heroes? Nobody asks them to go into unexplored places! I am dreadfully afraid he has made an impression. He has that ridiculously worshipping way of looking at girls. He looks at Patricia as if she were a religion—as if he were praying to her, and I don't suppose he ever goes to church, and if he does, it is probably to a Presbyterian one. There's an enormously rich and fairly youngish man in London now, a Mr. James Carter, one of the Carters of Cartersville. I want so much to meet him. I wish you hadn't dropped all your friends, London friends I mean. You see in a case like this what a pity it is! Patricia cut Baron von Felzenheim's dance last night, and he hardly ever asks a girl to

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dance! Do do what you can and persuade her to marry. I shan't be the dear old lady to live with that you are, and Patricia is meant to marry. It is all very well for Claudia, she's a manager. Patricia isn't in the least. She just smiles and her dimples get her what she wants. But when those dimples are wrinkles, what then? I used to have dimples.

'Primula's teeth are prominent. (I wish I hadn't called her that.) It would cost a hundred guineas to alter the shape of her face. What do you advise? Lady Pinhay says, "Leave them alone. They give such a kind expression, and nothing appeals more to men than kindness."

'As Primula has a bad temper, would that counterbalance it? Does Lady Pinhay know she has, and how does she know it? Dick says she meant nothing. It was only her way of telling me not to fuss. Our doctor says bad temper means bad health, that's all, and that Primula will grow out of it.

'Did your children go through phases? Having children isn't what it used to be. Freddy told me yesterday that I got on his nerves. Every child nowadays is born a critic.—Your affectionate,

'ANNA.'

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‘P.S.—You know how particular I am about spots on the cloth? Well, at luncheon yesterday I made a spot helping raspberry tart, and I pulled the dish nearer and hoped the children hadn’t seen it. After luncheon I told Freddy to say grace. He shut his eyes and, folding his hands, said, “Thank God for my good dinner, and thank God I didn’t make that spot!” Do you think that funny?’

I did.

A note enclosed from Patricia began ‘Angel’ and ended just as it should end to please a grandmother. The middle, too, contained just the information the same old woman wanted to hear.

Patricia confides in her grannie, wise, wise child that she is, and she really believes, or pretends to believe, that her grannie believes what she pretends to believe. But grannies see more than children think, and this one knows that Patricia promises six men one dance, and dances the six dances with one man. Of this her mother has no idea; but her father has, and he has poured out his troubled soul to his old mother. ‘You will influence her, mother?’ he says, and the mother

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of the man and the grannie of the girl squeezes the man's hand and keeps faith with the girl.

'Of course, mother, if you are prepared to make an impossible marriage possible!'

Why do the best of married children imagine that an old woman has no possible use for her money—*can't*, in fact, spend it?

I smile. I know whether it is made possible or not Patricia will go on loving her hero—for he is that. And I for one cannot blame her. It is the way she is made. Loyalty beams in her truthful eyes and honesty lurks in her smile. I wrote to her mother.

'MY DEAREST ANNA,—I shall count the hours until I see my Patricia. Benny almost as eagerly awaits Peters. She promises not to distract her. In fact, she is saving up work to do in order to be as busy as Peters. Benny assured me the other day she is not one to talk. As I always hear, when I open the passage door, a ceaseless stream of voice coming from her sitting-room, I asked her what she *did* talk about when she happened to talk, and she said, Mostly about which child had given her which vase. That's safe enough—*isn't it?*

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Primula's teeth, I should say, must be seen to. Why not leave her a little kind (with the shape of her face as God made it), and put her teeth back? This might, perhaps, be done for less than the sum you mention. But if you would like my birthday present to you to take the form of part of the extra sum needed, say so, and I shall be delighted to give it. But my little Primula must remain a little kind-looking, to me at all events. I am sorry times are bad—[that, I knew, would go home]. The wise doctor speaks very truly when he says bad temper is bad health; he knows, no doubt, how much more difficult it is to prescribe for than to diagnose. No healthy person should be cross unless he is called unhealthy; then he has every right to be as cross as he can be. In this modern cry of mind over matter I think people forget that, in trying not to think about their bodies, they think about them over much. Isn't it rather a new version of the old piebald horse and his tail? Forgive me, Anna, for the tiresome old woman that I am, and send me Patricia safe and sound.'

Patricia came. She is assuredly the slimmest

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thing on God's good earth, and the youngest and the freshest, as she is the least self-conscious. A difficulty confronts me and has confronted me for many years, and that is, how to explain the charm of Anna's children when she is by no means what any one could call an ideal mother? Does Patricia owe everything to her nurses and governesses? Or has Anna's selfishness made her child unselfish? Do unselfish mothers make selfish children? I begin to think so. An unselfish wife is to blame in that she makes a husband selfish, who with another wife would have had scope for the bettering of his character. It is very puzzling.

Patricia has the engaging manners of a delightful child with the good sense of the kind-hearted, wise woman she is one day to be. She looks her best in whatever she wears; but best of all in what she calls her 'glad rags,' which her dense grannie learns is only another name for country clothes. 'What else would you call them, grannie?' she asked, and asked in that way I had no answer ready other than 'Glad rags, of course, what else?' and Patricia skipped with joy and would have had me skip too, forgetting my age. She inveigled me into my 'glad rags,' which meant

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the unpacking of a box packed for the next jumble sale, and the breaking of Benny's heart in the unpacking. And as I put on my glad rags I felt something of the glory of youth returning—just for a fleeting second.

'And what shall we do, grannie?' said the wearer of the glad rags, and I discovered there was nothing I could do but walk round the garden, and that the child agreed to do; and, slipping her arm through mine, we walked down the garden, up the garden and round the garden, and we talked of things nearest to the hearts of us both. In reality we only thought; but each knew in her heart what the other was thinking, and we had no need to put into words that which without words we understood.

'How do you remember so well, grannie?'

'Because—perhaps because I have never forgotten, darling.'

'You are the youngest person I know in the whole world—much, much younger than Claudia,' whispered Patricia, for which heresy I gently reprimanded her. 'Much, much younger,' she repeated unabashed.

'But not nearly so wise,' I suggested.

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'She won't be the "dorable" grannie you are.'

'A grannie is what a grandchild makes her,' I explained.

I proposed that Patricia should play golf, but she shook her head and said, 'Oh, the weary walk after the ball, and the better you play the farther you have to walk.'

Dear child, it was an apt description of a game as it appears to me; but in no way did it describe the game as it appears to her, for I know she loves it, and I told her so. And she said she loved me better.

'That grannie takes for granted.'

'Grannie for granted,' murmured Patricia.

It is not with every one I would choose to spend the longest day in the year—but with Patricia I would, and Patricia, I imagined, had some reason for choosing the company of her grandmother that bright long summer's day, a day for glad rags, a day for youth, a day for a game of golf with a man in love with one (the ideal and only way of playing any game, especially croquet). But I knew the man Patricia loved was far away, and the men in love with her would be too many and spoil the game.

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The man she loved was so far away that she could speak of him to an old woman who might never live to see him. It was almost as good and certainly as safe as whispering things to one's own heart. Under the trees Patricia and I sat and looked up through the tracery of leaves to the blue sky above. Over the grass at our feet was thrown the lace of light and shade, which to me is one of the prettiest of summer's garments, and the coolest.

The lawn slopes gently till it reaches the sunk fence, and then those daisies and grasses, that are tired of being mown and cut, slip over the edge and so escape old Speedwell's scythe. The daisies are safe, if quickly smothered, but the grasses, I imagine, grow high and strong and thick. They riot with the ragged robin, no doubt, and when grown tall enough, climb, I suppose, up the other side of the sunk fence and, in whispering garden secrets to the waving grasses in the meadow, are caught and cut by the haymakers. Across the meadow, which Benny and Speedwell prefer to call the Park, runs a road which is very considerably used by the villagers as a public footpath. The Lullingtons too must use it if they

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would reach the village quickly, and as they must always do that, much life passes up and down the road; and from the drawing-room window, or the lawn, I can watch it.

I like on Sunday afternoons to see the young couples walking along it, and from Don't I learn which young man is walking with which young woman, and from her description I have come to know them by their gait. She has also initiated me into the mysteries of 'yarding, arming and waisting,' so that I can note their progress and, when it comes to 'waisting,' pray for them and for the prosperity of their house.

There is a dear little girl whose hat in hay-time I can see bobbing above the long grass as she walks along the road, and, when she judges herself to be opposite my sofa, she drops a dainty curtsy and is lost for the moment in the daisies and buttercups. But up she comes again and walks on her modest little way, full of goodness and sound principle. I envy the woman whose housemaid she will some day be.

On this summer's afternoon, as I sat in the garden with Patricia, they were cutting the hay in the meadow. Across the fence and over the

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lawn came the sound of the haymakers' voices, the sharpening of scythes and the scent of new-mown hay. 'It is good to be alive, grannie,' said Patricia, slipping down on to the grass at my feet and laying her head against my knee.

'It is good to be alive in a world of promise.'

'Promise of what?' she asked. 'The things we want or the things we don't want? It makes such a difference.'

'To me, perhaps, darling, of the promise of a world to come where I shall meet again those I love.'

'Does that really comfort you? This life seems so wonderful.'

'The hope of another life is as strong in my heart as is the certainty in your mind of the coming of another spring, and it is that hope that——'

'And for me,' whispered Patricia, 'it is not enough—there must be many springs.'

'You are too young; your world is this world. The one you are to love best—you do love best—is of this world and young.'

Patricia nodded.

'How did it happen?' I asked.

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‘How do such things ever happen? Have you forgotten? Did Grannie-Man see you for the first time and not fall in love with you?’

I took the child’s hand in mine. ‘It seems to me Grannie-Man must always have loved me. But tell me about your man, my baby Patsy!’

‘I’m not a baby! That’s just it, I am old, old, old. I see other girls of my age, children, without a care. I must appear a child because mother wouldn’t understand. She doesn’t expect me to have any thoughts beyond frocks and frills. If I look serious she takes tickets for the Gaiety, which is the saddest place in the world if you don’t feel like it. I hate to be made to laugh when I don’t want to, and of course I laugh—laugh till I ache—and then mummy looks as much as to say, “There, I told you so! Wasn’t I right?” and I go home and cry myself to sleep. She imagines there is something, I know, and she thinks if I see lots of men it will be all right. Did she ever really love father? I asked her once and she said she had the children. I can’t imagine that could make up to any woman for the other thing. Children can’t make up, can they, grannie? Having me, feeling as I

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do towards her, can't be to mummy what it would be if daddy loved her as I imagine a man might love. Why, what I feel for mother couldn't make up for anything.'

'You mustn't say that, darling,' I said.

'To you I may say anything, grannie. I couldn't make up!'

'No, darling, you couldn't make up. Nothing in the world can make up. But children are wonderful things, and without them, you must remember, grandchildren are an impossibility.'

'Grannie, I was going to ask you something—but I won't.'

'Can't you?'

Patricia shook her head and I asked no more. I sometimes think old people would gain more of young people's confidence if they did not demand more than the young want to give or can give. There is a very real reserve in the young mind which must be respected.

'Isn't it the best thing in the world, grannie?'

'Quite the best, darling.'

'Then why mayn't I have it if God gives it to me?'

'Who would take it away?' I asked.

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‘Mother,’ she said gently; ‘she doesn’t understand, poor darling.’

‘And the time seems long?’

Patricia didn’t answer.

‘Will it be long to him too?’

A gentle pressure of the child’s arm on my knee for answer.

‘My darling.’

What would Anna say, I wondered? It is difficult to be loyal both to mother and daughter.

‘It’s a funny thing, isn’t it,’ said Patricia, ‘that there is only one man in the world. There must be others as charming, as delightful as this one, as good-looking or perhaps as ugly; but they won’t do. Can you explain it?’

I said I imagined no one could. There must be girls—for the sake of argument—as charming as Patricia Legraye, and yet the young man didn’t think so. Wasn’t that so?

Patricia nodded. ‘So he says.’

I asked her to tell me about the first meeting. She said there was nothing to tell. They met. ‘I walked into the room; he was standing talking to Mrs. Joyce. Mrs. Joyce said my name and his, and it was done.’

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‘ And you knew it, wonderful child-girl just out of the schoolroom ? ’

‘ I knew it,’ said Patricia simply, ‘ when he talked of the lonely places of the world. I felt jealous of his loneliness, and I ’m not jealous as a rule. I resented his loving to be alone when he should have wanted me—there, grannie, I ’ve told you what I wouldn’t tell any one in the world! If I told mummy she would say, “ Patricia, how *fearfully* unladylike when you didn’t even *know* the man ! ” ’

Patricia said she would love to read me some little bits out of his letters. She drew out of the front of her blouse, in some mysterious manner, a crumpled letter. ‘ Doesn’t he write beautifully ? ’ she asked, holding it up for me to see.

I said he made the Greek ‘ E.’ Patricia laughed. ‘ Clever Grannie Patts, as Putts says. I don’t know what kind of an “ E ” he makes.’

She opened the letter and read the little bits in a low voice. I could only guess at the pinkness of her cheeks, for her head was turned away. This writing of boys and girls to each other puzzles me, old woman that I am, and behind the times.

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When I was a girl the man who loved a girl wrote her a love-letter pure and simple.

In the letter Patricia now read to me there was no mention of love. It might have been written by a friend to a friend; on the other hand it might as easily have been written by a husband to his wife, old married people and good comrades. It argued a great intimacy, a certainty that everything about the one would interest enormously the other; but I felt the deeper feeling was expressed by the tenderness of the intonation of Patricia's voice. It was her voice that read love into the words. But, of course, it was honourable of him to write as he wrote when they were not engaged. I had not given him credit for a reticence which was right and proper under the circumstances. But I had looked for human nature, not reticence.

When Patricia stopped reading, I said they were delightful bits, and very interesting to lovers of natural history and geography.

'Then,' she said, 'he says something silly at the end; he loves teasing.'

I asked to hear the silly bit—thinking that when a man is most silly he is sometimes most serious.

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'It's only this,' she said, running her finger down the page; 'he says, "I wonder if we shall ever find again either of us such a friend as you have been to me and I hope as I have been to you. I believe we should be strong enough—if the test came—to give each other up. Should we? When you find a man better than I am, and worthier——" Isn't he silly?' said Patricia, 'as if I could!'

Silly? Silly? My heart beat to breaking point. At that moment I could have met in single combat and defeated, too, the treacherous scoundrel. Was this the way of breaking off a friendship that had become irksome? That Patricia was sublimely unconscious of any such intention was absolutely certain. She turned her radiant face towards me, and in her eyes I saw that mysterious happiness that comes from one cause alone.

'Shall we go to the Lullingtons to-night?' she asked.

So to the Lullingtons we went. All that going to the Lullingtons entails is a note to say we are coming.

Why is it that people with small houses always

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have room ; people with a few servants can always have as many extra to a meal as they like ? For the same reason can people with one fat pony drive farther afield than can people with two fat horses and one fat coachman.

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X

PATRICIA and I walked to the Lullingtons ; it was not an occasion on which to sport goloshes, for the road was as dry and as clean as only a road—a sandy road—can be in summer.

Along the road on this summer's evening came old Sainfoin walking, carrying a basket on his back. He is a familiar figure in the village. By trade a baker, he comes from a neighbouring hamlet, bringing his wares to sell. It is not taking the bread from the mouths, or the ovens rather, of the bakers in our village, because they bake but three times a week, and on those days on which Sainfoin does not. So Sainfoin has for many years supplied a want, somewhat indifferently, but I believe to the best of his ability. He used, at one time, to bring the bread in a pony cart. Then he brought it more slowly, but as surely, in a donkey cart. One day I met him walking beside his donkey and, stopping him, asked how business was doing.

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'Business ? well enough, ma'am, well enough. Simon's getting no younger.'

Simon was the donkey. I put my hand on his dear rough head. I love donkeys and I told Sainfoin so. He smiled. 'We've never had a word, ma'am, Simon and me,' and he patted Simon's head, and at the same time my hand. 'Have we, Simon, old man ?' he said. I withdrew my hand gently, and Simon, as was his habit, said nothing.

On this summer's evening Patricia and I stopped old Sainfoin. 'How is business ?' I asked.

'Pretty middlin', ma'am,' he answered, and would have passed on.

'And Simon ?' I asked.

There was a pause. Old Sainfoin shifted the basket on his back.

'Have you had words ?' I asked.

'Just about that, ma'am, parting words ; they were hard to speak.'

Patricia pressed my arm spasmodically and Sainfoin would have passed on. 'Wait, Sainfoin,' I said ; 'how is business ?' I insisted on knowing.

'About done, ma'am,' replied the old man. 'I'm about done too.'

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‘No, my good man, you ’re nothing of the kind. Come and see me to-morrow morning and tell me all about it; we will see what can be done. You have more friends than you know and better friends than you imagine. Good evening.’

‘Good evening and God bless you, ma’am—and the young gentleman.’

‘That comes, Patricia,’ I said, ‘of being so slim and of wearing so little clothing.’

‘But I don’t look like a boy, do I?’ she asked.

I looked at her and said I could *just* tell the difference.

‘Will you get his donkey back?’ she asked.

I said I would try.

‘Will the people give it up?’

‘The donkey, Patricia? No, they will not give him up, but for a consideration they may allow me to give him to Sainfoin.’

We found the Lullingtons deep in an argument with little Miss Cherry, who is supposed to live in the village, but who lives mostly with the Lullingtons. Mrs. Lullington having discovered, in days gone by, that Miss Cherry had about as much money as would keep a hen robin from starvation, had, on the plea of being lonely,

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persuaded Miss Cherry to spend most of her days at the Warren, which name not inappropriately describes the Lullingtons' house, although it is better known by that of Bunny Lodge. Miss Cherry must be easily taken in if she can imagine Mrs. Lullington lonely.

As we walked into the drawing-room, Miss Cherry had just announced the fact that a friend of hers and theirs had not passed an examination.

'Did he go up?' asked Mrs. Lullington, without malicious intent I am sure.

'That, dear,' said Miss Cherry, looking pained, 'I cannot say. It is not the point. I said he had *not* passed.'

'But,' said Don't Lullington, 'if he didn't go up how could he pass?'

'Whether he went up or not, Louisa Lullington,' said Miss Cherry, 'is neither here nor there. It is another question altogether. All I wish to state is what I did not see with my own eyes, and that was his name among the *passeés*.'

'Parsees? They're black. What's he got to do with black people?'

'Don't, dear, don't,' said Mrs. Lullington. 'Here is Mrs. Legraye—and Patricia.'

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Don't sprang up, glancing defiantly at Miss Cherry, who trembled beneath her gaze. The dear little Cherubim, as the Lullingtons call her, was suffering under an agony of apprehension lest she had used a word wrongly. Pronunciation was a pitfall which for the true gentlewoman she knew should not exist, yet it was one that yawned, a veritable chasm, at her feet whenever she was at Bunny Lodge, because the Lullingtons made her so nervous.

All this I felt was passing through her mind, because the troubled spirit was reflected in her poor little face. To distract the attention of every one I told of our meeting with old Sainfoin.

'Sainfoin?' said Miss Cherry. 'Lady Bruxton was speaking of him only yesterday. She said he was very disrespectful, he didn't touch his hat to her the other day. She said it was a sign of the times!'

'It's a sign he's blind, nearly blind, dear old thing,' said Don't, her eyes full of the tears of righteous indignation. The tears brimmed over and ran down her flushed cheeks. I loved her for those tears.

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‘Not blind, Don’t, is he?’ I said; ‘I have never discovered that.’ Then I remembered the touch of his hand on mine.

‘He wouldn’t want you to know, because no one would eat his bread if they knew.’

‘Would *you*, Don’t?’ asked her mother a little anxiously.

‘Of course I would! I’d eat boiled eagle if it did any one any good.’

‘Rough on the eagle,’ said a voice from the floor. (There are always a few Lullington boys on the floor playing with puppies. I think it is one of the things that makes the Cherubim nervous.)

‘Dear Mrs. Graye,’ she sometimes says, ‘you never know at Bunny Lodge when a voice won’t come from the back drawing-room. It is very upsetting.’

‘But Don’t, darling,’ said her mother, ‘I can’t have you eating unwholesome things for the sake of any one.’

Don’t said we had all been eating Sainfoin’s bread and were *alive* to tell the tale; which, of course, was true.

I asked Don’t how she knew about old Sainfoin.

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She said she couldn't tell, because if she did we would never eat his bread again.

I suggested there might be better ways of helping him than eating his bread.

'Fire away,' said Do.

'Well,' said Don't, 'if you 'll *promise* it shan't make any difference I 'll tell you. He went to fetch some skim milk the other day, and he took a paint-pot to bring it home in, and there was paint at the bottom of the can—or pot or whatever it was. That 's all !'

I wondered if it was the precious colour we had all been striving after. 'Was it green, Don't ?' I asked.

'Yes, but not *the* one—much yellower.'

I, for one, should not be surprised if the people in Sainfoin's village and ours did not eat of his bread. We told Don't so very kindly. But she was not to be appeased.

It is the same impetuous spirit of kindliness and tender-heartedness that sends her through the woods shutting the traps : to the cottages to warn of visits impending, those women who, through their untidiness, are under the ban of expulsion at the hands of the Squire ; the same

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spirit that sends her to sit with the drunkard till the craving for drink shall have passed; that presides over the classes, held under the Leech-tree, for those backward children who can't do their lessons in school; who can only read with an arm round their waist. Don't's arm is ready, and the little readers, under its encouraging pressure, conquer quite long words. It is the same spirit that sends Don't to the poachers to warn them of night-watchers; to the night-watchers to warn them of poachers; the same spirit that keeps her awake through a dull sermon. And the same spirit it is that makes Don't Lullington Don't Lullington.

'My sister is properly "out,"' said Don't to Patricia; 'she'll be down in a minute. She's not looking her best to-day, because she scratched her nose on a rose-bush last night when we were playing "bouncy out" in the dark.'

The door opened and in came Diana.

'I see nothing wrong with her,' I whispered to Don't, who squeezed my hand, gratitude beaming in her eyes. 'The scratch makes her skin look all the whiter, doesn't it?' she suggested.

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And that perfectly expressed the Lullingtons' outlook on life.

'So *this*,' I thought, as I looked at Diana, 'is the girl Hugh loves.'

'So *this*,' I imagined the girl saying, 'is *his* mother.'

She knew me very well of course, but an old woman is one thing, the mother of the man you mean to marry is another.

Diana is unlike Don't. She is prettier, less impulsive, easier to live with, no doubt, but to me far less interesting. She is over-sensitive to the eccentricities of her family, yet ready enough to be proud of them where they are understood. Perhaps it is her love for them that makes her critical, just as it is Don't's love for them that makes her glory in their being different to everybody in her world.

Diana wore a high-waisted white muslin dress with a blue sash, and in her fichu a pink rose. I could hear Hugh asking me if she didn't look a Romney, and she did.

'You are very smart, darling,' said her father. 'Are you going to a ball?' (It is just the kind of question a girl loves.)

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‘Dear John,’ said Mrs. Lullington, ‘Diana has worn that gown every evening. She made it herself.’

‘For all that she might be going to a ball,’ said Mr. Lullington.

Then Don’t explained to him it was only a ‘half and half’; whereupon he caught her and kissed her and asked me if she wasn’t a wise and beautiful child. This restored the true Lullington atmosphere and we dined. After dinner Don’t, in a softened mood, sat hand in hand with Miss Cherry, to make up, I knew, for her hastiness before dinner.

Miss Cherry looked pleased but a little nervous. She wore mittens, and the pressure of Don’t’s ‘making up’ squeeze was taking a year’s wear out of them. In consideration for the life of her only pair of mittens, Miss Cherry withdrew her hand from the kind clasp of Don’t, and came over to the sofa and sat between me and Mrs. Lullington, who whispered, ‘Do is reading in the back drawing-room for an examination; we must be quiet for a few minutes.’

Don’t talked in a whisper to Patricia, Diana to an elder brother, and I sat and listened to the

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shrill little voice of Miss Cherry raised in plaintive confession to Mrs. Lullington.

‘My dear,’ she said, ‘a *terrible* thing has happened; I have lost my collecting-card. I have searched and searched! It weighed upon me very much until I suddenly thought that the Lord could not mean me to collect.’

Mrs. Lullington said that was quite evident. It could mean nothing else.

‘But, dear,’ went on Miss Cherry, ‘a worse thing has happened. I have lost my *Bible*.’

‘Then the Lord can’t mean you to read it,’ came Do’s voice from the back drawing-room.

I quite understood then how disconcerting a thing a voice from the back drawing-room might be.

It must not be imagined that as a rule any one spoke at the Lullingtons without every one else speaking at the same time, or that any question was ever raised without violent arguments ensuing.

When Do spoke the storm broke. Patricia listened to it all with wide-open eyes and smiling lips. It was all so delightfully young. She enjoyed it just as I did; but to her it was all fresh

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and delightful. (When we got home she said to me, 'Grannie, I had no idea people could be so happy without a good cook.' So much for Anna's point of view.)

During the evening Diana and Don't Lullington sang. They have fresh young voices and they sing in tune. All the Lullingtons sing in tune. That possibly is one of the reasons why they will be bound to suffer all through their lives.

I imagine the really happy person to be he who does not know when another sings out of tune. To him all music may be joy. But the man who knows and who draws in his breath sharply as though in pain (which, of course, he is bound to be) when another sings flat or sharp, must be devoid of all sense of kindness. If he does it in order to show how musical he is, then he adds to the sin of thoughtlessness that of the lack of charity. It is the bounden duty of those who know to suffer in silence. It lies within their province, and perhaps their power, to prevent their immediate relatives singing, and more they may not in Christian charity do.

All through that happy evening at the Lullingtons I was haunted by the sentences

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Patricia had read out to me in her dear, happy voice from the letters of her lover, and I went to bed unhappy and perturbed. Not less so Benny. 'Is Miss Patricia quite herself, ma'am?' she asked as she brushed my hair.

'Miss Patricia hasn't been crying, Benny. She has been laughing so much.'

'I didn't mean that, ma'am; I know the state you are in when you return from an evening at the Warren; but is she herself?'

'Well, not quite, Benny.'

'Forgive me, ma'am, is she—in love?'

'I imagine so, Benny.'

'Will it end happily, ma'am?'

'I am about to ask that it may.'

'In your prayers, ma'am, if I may ask the question?'

'In my prayers.'

'Make I take the liberty of asking the same thing, ma'am?'

'Of course.'

'It might have more weight if mentioned by two.' Then apologetically she added, 'Where two or three are gathered together—the difference in a room wouldn't matter.'

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‘Why make a difference, Benny, is there not room beside my bed? Think of the children who have knelt there.’

Benny shook her head. She would not presume. ‘I’m always thinking of them, ma’am, and now it’s their children that keep us awake. Good night, ma’am.’

When I was young my friends used to tell me I should never be old and I believed them. Now that I am old it seems difficult to believe I was ever young, and most difficult of all to make young people believe it. The glamour of youth is a thing of the past. We cannot conjure it back if we would.

Another characteristic of youth is gone, and that is its hardness. The inexorable line it drew, dividing right from wrong, grows fainter as we grow older. Not that it is less clearly drawn; but our eyes, dimmed with age, cannot see it so plainly as we used to, and we realise that there are those who, born blind, can never have seen to draw the line. So in our old age we see hope that when we were young we should not have looked for. What I see most clearly, with my old eyes, is in every man the child who was once

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his mother's. And once look upon men as children, there is none so bad that in the end he shall not be better. The world is his schoolroom, life is his teacher, and, thank God, man is not his judge or woman either.

Claudia says there lies danger in every line of my gospel. There lurks also, I venture to think, hope.

When I judge Claudia to be in the mood to bear it, I read her extracts from my book. When I read her the bit about blindness, she waited impatiently till the end and then said, 'It would be less like a book and more like you, darling, if you added, "But men have great difficulties to contend against. They are heavily handicapped, dear things."' So I added, 'But we must remember men are heavily handicapped, dear things.'

'That 's better,' said Claudia, '*underline dear things.*'

Claudia is ridiculous. She insists that I like men better than women—and what if I do!

Another of the alleviations of growing old is the loving attention Benny lavishes upon me. There are perhaps two or three nights in the year when, owing to the extreme delicacy of my

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health, she feels it her duty to sleep on the sofa in my room !

On those nights, as I lie awake, I can see, by the light of the fire, the form of Benny wrapped in her red dressing-gown, sleeping on the sofa. As I lie and look at her I laugh, until from laughter I pass easily enough to tears ; tears when I see how old, in repose, her dear face looks ; how small her hands seem folded, how worn in my service they have become.

I look back to those long years through which she and I have lived together, and I feel, however little I have done for my children, they have had the most lovely example before them of the beautiful devotion of a good and most unselfish woman. What I did for my children, I did because they were mine. What Benny did for them she did because she loved them, and perhaps because of the other woman whose children they are.

As I lie awake watching her, I think that if there is one thing for which I pity the young people of the present day it is that, when they come to my age, there will be no Nannies like those of my day. A young nurse said to me not long ago, ' You see, ma'am, we must think of our

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future. Things are not what they used to be. We can't wait to be turned away from a place at fifty. The families are not what they used to be. A nurse in the old days used to be able to count, more or less, on ten children !'

That was a new and sobering train of thought and enough to keep me awake. My Patricia, for instance, starting off with the promise of a family of ten, exacted by the little nursery maid who now wheels Bounce, when Bounce wishes to be wheeled. It was unthinkable ! The nursery maid had no right to demand it. Times have changed. She must marry and have children of her own and not expect others to have them for her.

At moments like these Benny awakes and asks if I called.

'No, Benny,' I say, 'I am thinking of Mrs. Richard's nursery maid Annie, will she make a good nurse ?'

'She may, ma'am. But her heart is not in it. She's always thinking of men. There's not a lifeguardsman in London that doesn't know Miss Bounce by sight.'

I was right. Annie would marry. Patricia would be under no obligation. . . .

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XI

DON'T LULLINGTON has the kindest inspirations of any one I know, man, woman or child. She is always devising some way of making some one happy, and she works in those channels through which she knows will flow the waters of their deepest content.

Aided and abetted—after that evening spent at the Lullingtons—by Patricia, she rose to great heights, and having confided to Patricia that what, at the moment, weighed heaviest on her heart was the general despondency of Miss Cherry's nature, she held her breath and Patricia's hand while she thought deeply, then triumphantly she announced the flash of an idea.

Now Miss Cherry's trouble in life is her uncertainty as to whether or no her neighbours like her and appreciate her efforts to be kind and friendly towards them. She is afraid much of her effort is wasted because misunderstood. She says her

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reserve is counted coldness ; her modesty, pride ; her diffidence, weakness.

All this Patricia learnt from Don't and handed straight on to me, deviating, she assured me, neither from the paths of truth nor from the by-roads of accuracy.

I had already known that Don't played 'swops' with Miss Cherry ; but to little practical purpose. Even that most heartening of games left her unconvinced. It is a game played by the Lullingtons, and is an exchange of compliments said of the one to the other by a third party. If Don't, for instance, heard something very delightful said of Miss Cherry, she must tell Miss Cherry of it, the strict rules of the game being that Miss Cherry must tell Don't one in return—in fact 'swops,' its name, best describes it. I invite any one in low spirits to set about to collect swops and exchange them at the earliest opportunity. They must feel the better for it, and they will be surprised to find how friendly a place the world is. But Don't, in the charming modesty of her disposition, felt that it would be unlikely that Miss Cherry could have enough swops ready in exchange for all the nice things Don't forced

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people to say of Miss Cherry, so she didn't stick to the strict rules of the game.

But even that didn't cheer Miss Cherry. Then it was that Don't had the idea she imparted to Patricia; the immediate outcome of which was that Don't asked Miss Cherry to meet her, four days from then, on the staircase. (The staircase in the Lullingtons' house is the place sacred to secret talks.)

On the day appointed, therefore, on the third step from the top (Don't's feet on the sixth, and Miss Cherry's on the fourth), sat Don't and the Cherubim.

Don't asked Miss Cherry if she would believe nice things said of dead people?

And Miss Cherry, folding her two little hands reverently, murmured, 'Of the dead all things may be said.'

'Well, then,' said Don't, 'are you afraid of death, Cherubim darling?' and Miss Cherry said on the contrary it was a release to which she was daily looking forward.

Patricia, who was watching from above, says Don't opened her eyes at that.

'Well, Cherubim darling, I've done something

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to show you, to make you, to *force* you to believe how much everybody loves and respects you. I could cut out the *respects*, if you would rather. I have written your obituary notice.'

Miss Cherry's hands, I am told, went up with a gesture of awed appreciation.

'And,' said Don't, 'the account of your funeral! It's here. Can you bear it? You have no idea how fond everybody was of you.'

Out of her pocket Don't drew a neatly folded column of printed matter, so like the column of a newspaper as to deceive Miss Cherry, who never could, even on ordinary occasions, believe her eyes.

'Shall I read it?' asked Don't.

'Please, dear,' said Miss Cherry with trembling lips.

Don't read it. Miss Cherry listened, apparently unmoved, to the description of the universal expression of sorrow; she bore with equanimity the reference to the ever-ready help she had been to the clergy; but when Don't read that a beautiful wreath had been sent by the Earl and Countess of Bruxton, it was more than she could bear.

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‘Not Lord Bruxton, Don’t!’ And Don’t nodded, ‘And all the Lullingtons.’

Miss Cherry waved that aside. That was only to be expected; they could hardly do less.

‘Shall I read them all?’ asked Don’t.

Miss Cherry said she could hardly bear it—such kindness. ‘Are you sure about Lord Bruxton?’

‘Quite, quite,’ said Don’t; then hurriedly—she was not entirely without shame even in her kindness—she added, ‘the most touching thing of all was when I took the thing into the printer’s to be printed. The man behind the counter clasped his head and said, “Dead—Miss Cherry dead—it is impossible; she was buying birdseed, next door, only a few days ago,” and when I said it wasn’t true he was so pleased! That shows!’

‘But was he not very much surprised at the notice?’

‘No,’ said Don’t; ‘he said it was a thing which was becoming every day more common, because every one felt what a pity it was to leave unsaid, till after death, those kind things that, said during life, would give such immense pleasure. There’s going to be a society for it.’

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As a woman treasures for years, under lock and key, the description of her wedding, and reads it at those moments when the romance of life seems to become dulled and dimmed, so little Miss Cherry, I am sure, keeps—under lock and buttonhook—the description of her funeral; and that she looks at it often, I am sure, and that she no longer criticises the frivolity of the Bruxton week-end parties, I know.

The result of Don't's kind thought is this—Miss Cherry takes much more for granted the goodwill and affection of her neighbours; she no longer imagines herself cut after church, avoided in the post office, or shunned in the sandy lane.

But when Miss Cherry, after church, drawing Don't aside, whispered 'Show me the place,' Don't for the moment was nonplussed; but she indicated the place, and Miss Cherry was seen to visit it later—alone.

Claudia says it is ridiculous of me to believe all those girls tell me; but I choose to believe what I want to believe and what it amuses me to believe.

'The Lullingtons are all mad,' she adds, and I

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say I like them mad. She says, so does she ; but she wouldn't like them less if they were a little less mad.

I am not so sure.

What I enjoyed most about Miss Cherry and Don't was Patricia's telling of it, because to tell it she sat on the end of my bed and I loved looking at her. She seemed to me such a child until I remembered that she was horribly much of a woman. I tried to go to sleep and to shut my eyes to the fact ; but I opened them again and stared into the darkness and I saw no light until the blind became framed in silver. Then I stole into Patricia's room and, finding her fast asleep, I wondered what kind of a man he was for whom the child-woman smiled so tenderly in her sleep.

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XII

'My small box, Benny,' I say with a strange feeling out of all proportion to the size of the box, when I prepare for my visit to Bettine. What is there about one child—although we love them all alike—that has the power to pull at our heart-strings, to play on our emotions, to soothe our sorrows, to share our joys, to understand us to the very foundations of our being?

So understanding a thing is my Bettine. She and I are mother and daughter, yet one; parent and child, yet children together. With no other child do I laugh so much; with no other child have I had reason to weep so much, for she has had a sorrow greater than any of her brothers and sisters have been called upon to bear. She has lost an only child—a child she loved as I love her—but she laughs. Is it that her husband should not guess at the depth of her yearning?—that I should not grieve? As if a laugh could blind the eyes of a mother! I love all my

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children dearly, but it is Bettine I bless every moment of my life for her life.

People ask me if she is pretty ? If I dared I should laugh at them for asking such a question. Is a sunbeam pretty ? a May day pretty ? a soft shower in springtime pretty ? a shadow on water pretty ?

‘You will be happy now you are going to Bettine,’ said Claudia, feigning a sadness and a jealousy she did not feel.

‘Am I never happy with Claudia ?’ I asked, taking her hand.

‘Not so completely, darling,’ she said, and I laughed. ‘You see,’ she added, ‘I keep you in order ; Bettine spoils you. If she spoilt you less my task would be easier.’

Bettine lives in old Chelsea. She and Derek are firmly convinced that there is no other house in the world like theirs—none so charming, which opinion I share. There is certainly no other staircase which, whether you go up or down it, leads to something so charming and delightful ; nor one whose banisters are so deftly twisted, nor one whose steps are so wide and easy (considering the size of the house).

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The rooms are panelled and the windows of the back rooms look on to a charming garden, from beyond which can be heard snatches of song sung by Italian sculptors at work. Also there sings in the garden itself (and in good English we may presume), at those times when it must sing, a blackbird. One might imagine, judging by Bettine's excitement over it, that it was the only blackbird in the world. No, it must have a mate or she would not be content. Even the sparrows are precious in her eyes, not on account of their scarceness perhaps, but because she chooses to look upon them as miracles. The unfolding of each lilac bud holds out the tenderest of promises to Bettine.

As I drove through the streets of London, on my way to Chelsea and Bettine, I sought to find good in everything, which must be my attitude of mind while staying with her, and I found in my taxi-driver something of that gentleness of spirit which is said to have belonged peculiarly to the people of ancient Japan. I have read that, in those days of long ago, it was held bad manners on the part of a young and strong man drawing a rickshaw to overtake and pass an old and weak

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man drawing a rickshaw. To have done so would have shown, on the part of the young man, a desire to glory in the superiority of his strength. So it behoved him to go slowly and not to pass the old man. It was a gentle trait in the character of a delightful people. Whether the traveller, supposing him to have been a foreigner sojourning in the country, found it so it does not concern us to say, nor could we if we would.

The spirit that in those long-ago days cost the traveller a little time cost me, in London, certainly two or three twopences. My taxi-driver showed a spirit of gentleness that was not characteristic of the driver of the old four-wheeler, for instance. No silvern speech was his in congested traffic, for gentleness in those days was not paid for at so much a minute. But my taxi-man would stop and wave a hand of kindly encouragement to the coster and his donkey; would draw up (his engine jiggeding the while) to let a coal cart pass. How he responded to the coalman's wink I could not, from the imperturbability of the back of his head, judge; but he cannot surely have let that pass, for if I know not taxi-drivers, I know men.

Bettine says it is well the taxi-driver should learn

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the gentleness of tolerance, because if carried into his private life it would make him a pleasanter husband to live with. And to make him that, at the expense of a few twopences, she holds cheap.

A visit to Bettine may as well be described typically—not that the same things happen each time I go there; but the same kinds of things—things that don't happen when I stay with Anna or Cynthia.

Particularly do I remember one winter visit when Bettine was expecting a cook to see her—her own dear cook having had to go home to take care of a father, lately changed from a difficult husband into a disconsolate widower.

Bettine stood at the window watching. She knew how valuable are first impressions. It was a winter's afternoon, but not yet dark. I sat before the fire and Bettine kept me in touch with street happenings.

In course of time she told me a delicious-looking woman, in a bonnet, was searching vaguely for a number. Bettine was certain the delicious woman was the cook looking for her, Bettine's, number. She was seized with apprehension lest

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the delicious woman should give up the search in despair. 'I love her already,' she vowed.

'Darling,' I said, 'if she gives up so easily she wouldn't be the kind of cook you would want. If at the critical moment such a woman upset the soup——'

'But she has such a dear face. Wait!'

Bettine rang the bell, and over the top of the stairs she said to the parlourmaid, 'Go out, please, and tell that nice-looking woman in a bonnet that this is 35, the number she is looking for. Run Huccabuck!'

And Huccabuck ran, as every one in the house does at Bettine's bidding, and came back breathless to say the woman was looking for 49 and had found it. Bettine was disappointed, but re-found happiness directly afterwards in the thought that as the woman at 49 had a disagreeable husband, it was only fair she should have a good cook, besides which it was possible that a good cook might make the husband a much nicer and happier man.

When Bettine's cook came, she walked straight to the house and turned out to be quite as nice as the 49 one had looked, and Bettine, having

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engaged her, sank into the chair at the other side of the fireplace and said, 'I know I shall love her.'

When I asked if she could cook, Bettine said, 'Would she be a cook if she couldn't?' and we laughed.

The cook, of course, turned out to be an admirable cook. Bettine's domestic luck again.

As riches go Bettine and Derek are not well off. They cannot afford to buy most of the things they buy, therefore the buying is a great delight to them, and to the household a great excitement. Bettine is afraid there are treasures bought that the servants pay for by eating less. I beg her not to worry about that, and she promises not to.

Derek suffers at times with Bettine, I know. He submits to crockery and quaint pots and pans—(he was brought up with silver entrée dishes)—and he has learnt to turn upside down, without accident, most shapes and forms of small casseroles. He says he likes matting in his dressing-room and his tea out of a brown pot, and a bare dining-room table. But at times he finds Bettine's enthusiasm a little trying, because, like most Englishmen, he has a wholesome dread of being

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made conspicuous. Perhaps the greatest ordeal he ever passed through was at the play—*Henry of Navarre*—when Bettine, in an agony lest Henry should drink of the deadly potion handed to him by his wife (in ignorance of its nature), called out, 'The ring's green!'

The ring, it may be remembered, was set with a red stone which was warranted to turn green when in close proximity to poison. Henry no doubt heard Bettine for, just in time, he dashed the poisoned cup to the ground and the audience breathed again. To Bettine King Henry owed his life. To Bettine the audience owed a distraction; but poor Derek in an agony implored her to be quiet, which, having saved the life of the king, she was perfectly willing to be.

Claudia would never have done such a thing. Turned rubies green as grass, she would have remained dignified through it all.

Why should children born each of the same parents, brought up by the same nurse in the same surroundings, grow up to be so different?

Bettine is an adorable audience and she carries that gift into everyday life. As a child she used to say, 'Oh, *do* be funny.'

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She has the good sense not to say that now, knowing how extinguishing a thing it is, but she is always ready to be amused.

My summer visit to Bettine I pay in June. During that month there falls an anniversary. It is a day on which I could not be separated from her. On that day in June we breakfast early. Also a little more quietly than usual—or do I imagine that? I see Derek look at Bettine with a look in his eyes just a little different to that of other days—or do I imagine that? His eyes seem to express what he dares not trust himself to speak.

Directly after breakfast Bettine and I leave the house. In a lowered voice Huccabuck tells the cabman where to drive, and softly she closes the door. We drive to the station, a big, noisy station. Out of the train we wait for pours a stream of men bound citywards, fathers most of them working for their children. The train takes us through the slums of London, past the sad, sad back windows of London, out into God's glorious country and, after an hour or two, stops at a tiny wayside station. Out on to the gravel path we step, and, passing through the little

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country station, we find a fly waiting for us. Into the fly we get and the horse starts slowly on its way.

'Wild roses,' whispers Bettine, and her eyes, wet with unshed tears, look up to the hedges through which we pass, and her hand steals into mine. When we have gone some distance the driver turns and, at a nod from Bettine, draws up to the side of the road and she jumps out. (She could do it quite as easily if the horse were going at its fastest pace, so slow a going is it, but she would not hurt its feelings.) She cuts trails of wild roses. Then she gets into the fly again and, of those branches, deftly twisting and twining them, she makes a wreath, a garland, a crown—whatever one likes to call it. Then she lays the crown—I choose to call it—on the seat before us.

'What a day!' she whispers. 'Look at the sky,' and I look. It is blue, brilliantly blue, and unclouded.

'I will get out here,' she says, as we come to a steep hill, and the old horse, glad of the excuse, stops and pulls at the long grass on the bank. I am not allowed to get out, and beside the carriage Bettine walks with her hand on the door.

At the top of the hill the horse stops again

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and looks round as much as to say, the old one must get out now, and out I get.

On our left is a little grey church, so old, so peaceful. Guardian of the valley below, it has stood for centuries, aspiring heavenwards. We pass under the lych-gate—Bettine leading the way—into the little church. It is cool after the heat outside. I shiver.

Up the centre of the aisle is a row of tiny chairs in single file, old oak chairs for the children of the parish to sit upon. What child would not go to church to sit upon such a chair? On one in particular Bettine's hand rests. On it she lays the crown of roses and beside it she kneels, and beside her I kneel. Then we go out into the sunshine again, and I know that on a little cross before which we stand is written the name of Derek, aged three, but I cannot see to read it. I leave Bettine and I go and sit looking over the valley which, now bathed in sunshine, once lay, to my Bettine, in the deep shadow of death.

In a few minutes she joins me and, slipping down on to the grass beside me, she says, 'I see him so plainly, so plainly.' I nod. So do I, perhaps not less clearly.

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‘Rolling down the hill,’ she adds smiling, and I nod again.

‘It was on this hill we sat, the big Derek and I, and made plans to send him to Eton. He was to have gone there at whatever cost to ourselves—because Derek was there. . . . He would have been a cricketer—he promised so well—he had a natural swerve in his bowling. . . . He was put down for Lord’s the day he was born, do you remember? Then he was to have been a soldier. He couldn’t have stood an office life, could he? He hated sitting still. . . . He was so brave, wasn’t he? He didn’t know what fear was. He would have been so chivalrous. I love that in a man. He was so kind to younger children . . . there was nothing of the bully in him, was there? The big Derek rather wanted him to be a politician; but I didn’t—he was too——’

‘Honest?’ I suggest, and Bettine smiles.

‘Humbugging mummy, who loves a politician,’ says Bettine, and her mother, who really does love the right kind of politician, says it is perhaps because they are humbugs too that she loves them.

Through little Derek’s schooldays—that never

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came—we go step by step, Bettine leading the way. She knows more about it, of course, than the mother of many sons.

Then, in trying to fathom the mystery of why things happen, Bettine says perhaps, in some way or other, great sorrow would have come to the little Derek, and *that* she could not have borne. Then she tries to comfort herself by thinking that perhaps she was not the right kind of mother to have brought him up; but against that there are obviously so many people who are not the right mothers whose children live and are happy, and who become good cricketers and even better men.

‘Was the pain of parting from him less, it’s no use trying to understand,’ she says.

I look at Bettine’s baby face—it is that still—and in it I see through its smiles and tears an enormous capacity for suffering. (Every one who possesses sympathy must also possess that.) I see in her face too an enormous capacity for happiness—that too goes with sympathy.

A shadow falls across us. ‘Do I intrude?’ asks a gentle voice. We look up and see the old rector of the parish, who each year says just as

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gently, 'Do I intrude?' and each year Bettine makes the same reply and he takes her two hands in his and says, 'My child, my child,' and his thoughts, I know, are with that other child, and I know that he knows how near to Bettine is the spirit of that child, not only on this summer's day but always; through dark days and bright days, through winter, through summer, in the lonely places of the world, in the crowded places—his hand in hers, leading her.

We lunch with old Mr. Goodheart at the Rectory. It is all very quiet and peaceful. He talks just as much as we wish and no more. He shows us his dear friends, the birds and the flowers and his books. He gives us the food on which he lives, and delicious food it is—vegetables beautifully cooked, fruit deliciously served on cool green leaves.

By this old man it seems to me the religion we need is taught. It is full, satisfying, spiritual and so simple. There is none of the restlessness here, the longing for something fresh that disturbs those whose religion is as a thing dead, and whose arms are held out ready to embrace anything that seems new. From the little church on the hill

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is preached hope, two thousand years old, forgiveness, two thousand years old, pity, two thousand years old, and love older than the world itself. Nothing new. Children are bidden to come and they come; the old to be comforted and they find comfort; and when the old have lived their lives here they go to that other world, where there are many mansions prepared for them, and if Ellen, the old widow of the stonemason, thinks they have been built, some of them, by her Ebenezer and his fathers before him, and looks to a mansion that shall be but a glorified edition of the cottage that has been her home and theirs here on earth, what matters it? Heaven she has learnt is but another home; can it be strange to her? If she looks for that Christ she has served since she was a little child, shall she not know Him? Will her old eyes not be satisfied? Will her old hands need to touch the wounds? Shall she not know Him without that? Are His wounds not hers? And as He has healed her wounds, has she not helped to heal His?

As we walk through the village we meet old Ellen. She feigns surprise and forgets it later

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when she says, 'When I drew the curtain this morning I says to myself, It's *his* day—dear lamb!'

'Yes, Ellen,' says Bettine, 'it's his day, fresh from the hands of God.'

'Yes, love, it's just that,' says Ellen, 'fresh and clean. Every flower it seems has had its little face washed pure. He didn't like *his* face washed, did he, not more than any other boy? But it paid for the washing, didn't it, ma'am, so fair and lovely it was.'

'Are you going to ask us in, Ellen?' says Bettine.

'But surely, I've been watching this hour or more.'

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XIII

It seems to me that the striking difference between Bettine's friends and Anna's lies in the wearing of collars or no collars, rather. Bettine's friends wear none unless they be muslin and turned down. Anna's friends wear them boned to an extreme height. In their ears Anna's friends wear single pearls of enormous size and value. Bettine's friends wear gipsy ear-rings, or dangling ear-rings that sway pleasantly as their wearers talk earnestly. These small differences in outside things make a very great difference in inside things. Anna's friends play bridge by day and night. Bettine's affect lectures and read books limply bound. They talk in sweet low voices of beautiful thoughts found presumed within the limp covers of these books, or perhaps in life itself. They spend their patrimony on branches of greenery at some seasons of the year ; at others in branches of blossom ; and they look forward to the spring of every year as a child looks

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forward to its birthday treat. Anna's friends go to the kind of lectures smart women affect, and find there the opportunity to doze which they probably would not seek or find at home.

Bettine's friends are married to budding diplomatists, to literary men, to secretaries of well-known people.

Anna's friends are mostly in full bloom and are, in gardening terms, free flowerers. Among them I have met very charming men whose hearts, when they are not in their money markets, are in their rose gardens.

Bettine's friends have been known to wear tea-gowns made by their cooks. I have learnt, since I left Winthorpe, that there is no servant so remarkable, so wonderful, so devoted as the single-handed cook of a young couple. The more devoted the couple, the more wonderful becomes the cook, not necessarily in culinary matters, but quite possibly. Romance spurs her on. It is to her the breath of life.

Bettine's friends give charming little dinners where the table is bare—in the literal sense of the word—where the knives are not made to cut alone, where the glass looks old, and where the

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flowers are arranged with a view to beauty as well as to economy.

I have seen five pink tulips grace the table at one of Bettine's dinners, and, placed rightly by one who knows, and with the rather bare side to one who knows, they can look beautiful. Each tulip, it must be remembered, is burdened with the message of spring; and if they should open their hearts too widely Bettine has ways of restraining them from too great a want of reserve, and a gentle way of shutting them up without hurting their feelings by resorting to the indignity of pink cotton or silk. Bettine thinks spring messages should be whispered.

In Bettine's house I have seen the heads of roses floating like water-lilies, in bowls. There must be thousands of heads of roses lying uncared-for in rich men's gardens that might be sent to couples in old Chelsea who possess among their other blessings 'Munstead' bowls; and what couple worthy of their environment does not? A rose without a stalk is as useless to a gardener as is an umbrella without spokes to the rest of us.

On Anna's table the roses must have stalks three feet long. The silver is only a little more

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valuable than the lace and linen on which it stands. The food is quite as good as Anna knows how to order, and that is very good indeed. But her dinners lack the charm of Bettine's. They lack, too, the element of surprise. Bettine has a parlourmaid whose beauty is distracting: it is clothed in muslin and Valenciennes lace and lends an added charm to the dishes she hands.

When I stay with Bettine I frequent buses—for choice those drawn by horses, because in motor buses, Bettine tells me, no one says anything funny. There is hardly the time, and what time there is must be spent in keeping one's balance.

Once only in a motor bus did I hear anything nice, and that was on a very hot summer's day. The bus was full and a gentle voice at my right said, 'Neighbours are hot things, are they not?' I looked round and down to find the tiniest neighbour in the world, a dear old lady years older than myself, and just half the size.

It was in a horse bus that Bettine met with the cocoa adventure that she loved. The conductor, in offering the fares a sample of cocoa, began with Bettine. Now Bettine had no precedent to follow and didn't know how to reject

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so rare a gift; but being as anxious not to hurt the conductor as she was to escape the sample, she said she didn't care for cocoa, she never drank it; whereupon the company in the bus began to talk of cocoa, its nutritive properties, its power to cheer, and its many other virtues. One man held forth at some length on the varieties of cocoa, and then, folding his hands, announced that he was a grocer's assistant on his holiday and *ought* to know.

A battle royal ensued between the grocer's assistant and an old lady on the merits of cocoa shreds. The old lady maintained they were not appreciated as they ought to be. 'Only twopence a pound and all you have to do is to boil them long enough.'

'For how many years, madam?' asked the grocer's assistant. 'Shreds? Trash!'

Finally a very stout woman turned to Bettine and said, 'You should try nibs, the *most bilious* person can drink them.'

Poor Bettine, I should say a person who looks less bilious ~~ever~~ walked this earth. But she wouldn't for worlds have missed the scene to which, in the telling, I have done but scant justice.

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There is a bus story which is now ancient history. On the 27th of February 1900, Shrove Tuesday, I happened by good fortune to be in a bus when the ticket inspector announced Cronje's surrender. 'And,' he added, 'I shouldn't be surprised if Ladysmith was relieved to-day too.' Whereupon an old man in the corner of the bus leant forward and said, 'And pancakes too! Why, it's too many good things on one day.'

I would not tell Bettine how poor he looked.

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XIV

Dick and Anna have six children. Patricia is the eldest; then comes Primula; below her again Guy, who is at school; another boy Freddie in the schoolroom; and in the nursery two babies—one in the bundle stage christened Ponsonby and threatened with the nickname of Pounce, and a little girl aged four named Blanche, called by courtesy Bounce.

I am sure she could bounce, so round is she, so delicious and at times so beautifully solemn. That she thinks deeply is evident. What mostly she thinks about we may hear, or there are those of us who may hear, twenty years hence. But I shall not be among them, therefore to hear it I must go to my dreams.

I think she may bore the man she marries by telling him all she thought as a child. A man must love his wife very dearly to care to hear all she said as a child, all she didn't say, all she thought, all she didn't think and all her nurses

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thought she thought, when he is only waiting to tell her of the many things he *did* before she was born.

I left Bettine's house in time to arrive at Anna's by luncheon, at which meal, in my honour, Bounce and Freddy were to appear. They appeared, Bounce very clean and quite pleased to see me. But there was something else she had seen 'froo ve dining-room door.' Had I? I had seen nothing, so she whispered to me what it was—a chocolate pudding!

I said it tickled. I meant the whisper: she thought I meant the pudding and was frightfully interested. 'While it goes down, does it?' she asked, incredulity expressed in every tone of her voice.

When we went into the dining-room the sight of the chocolate cream caused her to draw a short ecstatic breath inwards. She looked from the pudding to me, and kissing me again with greater warmth, gurgled, '*Vat's* it.'

Then she was lifted on to her chair and instantly she began to slide off it. There is a sliding scale in the degrees of a child's shyness.

'Bo-unce,' said Fraulein, 'seet up.'

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Fraulein showed Bounce how to do it and Bounce painfully followed her example.

‘Dat vill do—not so ’igh, Bounce. Dere—so!’

There remained Bounce looking very good and surprisingly slim. She has the same power of elongating herself as a canary has. To get a canary to do it, tap on the bottom of the cage. To get Bounce to do it Fraulein must set the pace. I preferred Bounce round.

‘Sit down, darling,’ I whispered, and she rounded to order.

‘Gan Gan,’ she said.

‘Darling,’ I replied.

‘Gan Gan,’ she repeated.

‘Yes, I ’m Gan Gan,’ I said with some pride.

‘Gan Gan.’

‘Yes, darling.’

‘Be quiet, Bounce,’ said her mother.

‘Must I?’ said Bounce; ‘it *does* hurt so.’

‘What happens when you aren’t good, Blanche?’

Bounce looked down and a faint pink stole over her face and lost itself in her curls. It was evident she knew exactly what happened, and that it was in some way connected with chocolate cream I

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guessed. There was a silence ; all eyes were upon Bounce. Then, taking courage, she looked up and around, vainly seeking a sympathetic eye, a trembling lip. I had difficulty in hiding both. Finally she fixed her eye upon the butler. 'Tarter,' she said, addressing him.

'Yes, miss,' answered Carter with the alacrity of the true child-lover.

'Vere's a fly cwawling on your head.'

'Thank you, miss,' said Carter.

'It's *vevy* tame,' she said, tremendously interested.

'Blanche,' said her mother, 'what have I told you ?'

Bounce folded her hands and said very softly and quickly, '*Not* to yeat wif my mouf full—*not* to walk in puggles—*not* to speak to Tarter ven uvver ladies and genklemen are vere—*not* to say darlin'—'

'Blanche,' said her mother sternly.

'Nannie letted me'—this triumphantly spoken.

'Blanche,' repeated her mother.

So far the conversation had consisted almost entirely of two words, Blanche and Bounce, said in varying tones of expostulation.

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'Now, Bounce, be good,' I whispered.

'Are you laughing at me?' she asked tentatively.

'No, darling,' I answered reassuringly.

'What *are* you at me?'

To that there seemed no answer.

After quite a long time Bounce said, 'Gan Gan, *will* you lean forward, please.'

'Why, darling?' I asked.

'Because I can't see Henry's face. It's all right now, I can. Don't you fink it's a *nice* face?'

'Bounce,' said her mother, and Henry for the moment relinquished his office of potato-bearer.

'Vich do you like best, Henry or James?' gasped Bounce. She must know at all costs. The cost had quickly to be met.

'Go upstairs, Blanche,' said her mother.

'Tarter,' with the dumb fury of the true child-lover in his eyes, drew out the chair and Bounce slid down and, with immense dignity and only one despairing look at the pudding, left the room.

'That child,' said her mother, 'has the most vulgar tastes. I can't think where she gets them from.'

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'She likes p'licemen *awfully*,' said Freddy, agreeing quickly with his mother.

'Fredday,' said Fraulein, 'eat your pudding—so!'

Freddy applied himself to the pudding. There was no knowing at what moment he might share the fate of Bounce, so it behoved him to hurry.

'Don't splutter like that, Freddy. You're spluttering your pudding all over the table.'

'I was only copying my sweetheart,' he pleaded, his eyes clouding.

'Go upstairs,' said his mother.

'Half a jiff,' said Freddy, piling up his spoon with pudding.

'Go upstairs.'

It was like the dear old story of the ten little nigger boys. One by one, it seemed, the children must go.

I asked who Freddy's sweetheart was of such curiously unreserved habits, and Anna said she was very charming and possibly she might have a lisp, but she never spluttered, of course.

'You over-excite the children, dear grannie. They mustn't come down again. Bounce is terrible. She was even as a baby. She began as

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soon as she could talk to call every man she met daddy.'

'She calls the postman daddy, at least she did once when she was little. He wasn't ever, was he?' asked Freddy, making for the door.

'Freddy,' said his mother, 'what did I tell you?'

'Not to speak with my mouth full—not to splutter. Is the postman anybody's daddy?'

'Fredday!' said Fraulein, almost in tears.

'Keep your hair on,' replied Freddy, 'I'm goin'; give a chap a chance. What's the fruit?'—this with a last lingering look.

'You can't have any,' said his mother.

'I guessed that long ago. It is hard,' he said, turning the door handle sharply and letting it go with a run.

'Freddy!'

Freddy disappeared and his mother wondered why her children were so naughty and their grandmother wondered if they were naughty at all. It takes a younger woman than a grandmother to judge. It seemed to me I could have kept quiet anything so small and delicious as Bounce.

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That afternoon I was given my chance.

Anna wondered if dear grannie would keep Bounce quiet for an hour or so because the nurse had to go to Brixton to see a sick father, one nursery maid to the gymnasium with Freddy, Fraulein to a French class with Petunia, Patricia had an appointment with the dressmaker, while she herself —

‘My dear Anna,’ I said, ‘if nobody in the whole world was engaged there is nothing I should like better than an hour with Bounce.’

So the Nannie to her father, the nursery maid to Macpherson’s, Patricia to the dressmaker, Anna to keep her appointment with the face masseuse, and in a drawing-room in Cadogan Square one old woman, one young child; in life at the opposite ends, on the sofa close together.

I began by asking Bounce what she had been doing since luncheon. She calmly said she had been eating chocolate pudding, surprised that I could have imagined her occupied in any other way.

‘*All* ve time,’ she said, nodding her head.

I asked her where she had got it from, and she said ‘Tarter.’

Then, by way of changing the subject, I admired

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her hair. She invited me to pull out a curl as far as it would go. I pulled it.

'Farver,' said Bounce, looking with some difficulty over her shoulder, 'a *little* farver,' she said. And a little farther I pulled it. It reached to her waist.

'It is long,' she said with a sigh. 'My goodens, it is long.'

I let go the curl and it sprang back into its place. 'Now it's short,' she said sadly.

I asked her for a curl to keep. She shook her head.

'Not one, darling?' I pleaded.

'Nope.'

Then, softening towards her importunate grannie, she proceeded to divulge the secret of curls hidden away 'underneef,' which only showed her to be greedier of her treasures than I had thought her.

Bounce ducked her head to show me the 'underneef' curls. 'Young curls,' she said with ecstasy; 'young vuns,' she repeated, and I said how young they looked and how soft.

'You *are* silly,' she said, and I felt absurdly crushed.

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‘Young vuns,’ she said under her breath. Then a fresh idea struck her. ‘Gan Gan, do you know what Fweddy calls this room?’

I said I hadn’t the slightest idea.

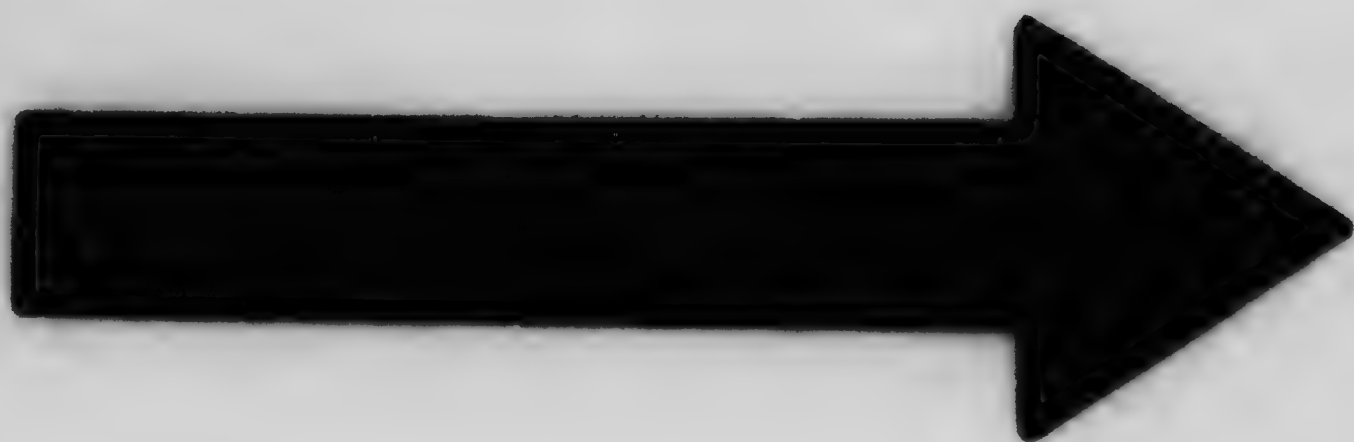
‘Then I’ll whisper. *He says*—it’s the beasti-fullest room he ever saw because there are no toys in it nor anyfing. *You* aren’t amusing me.’

I said I was so sorry. ‘*Are you?*’ she asked, looking to see if I really was. ‘You don’t look very sad,’ she said. ‘Shall we play shops?—say yes.’

Of course I said it; what else was I there for?

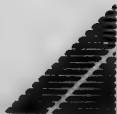
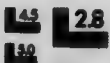
Then Bounce began to busy herself. Gan Gan must sit in the miggle of the sofa. In obedience to her commands I sat in the middle of the sofa. She became busier every moment. All the time she worked she talked in an undertone, talked with emphasis, arguing with an imaginary person who disagreed with her, *on purpose*. We can all imagine the kind of person who does that.

I was so interested in Bounce’s conversation that before I realised it I had become the shop and my lap the dumping-ground for all Bounce’s



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goods. Now I have more lap than some grandmothers and am proud of the fact; but no lap could harbour all Bounce would require of it. The treasures were piled quickly and, for some time deftly, with safety. The burden became, at last, so great that I dared not move. Still they came. I implored Bounce to desist. Bounce was obdurate. The contents of the writing-table were still to come.

All Anna's *objets d'art* (as Anna calls them) were on my lap. The last thing Bounce fetched from the table was an ink-pot in the shape of a bell. Suddenly Bounce thought she would ring that bell. I saw the dawn of inspiration on her face.

'The shop's ready,' she said.

'Don't ring that bell, darling,' I implored.

'I must, to tell the peoples,' she said.

She rang it. The next moment she stood open-mouthed, gazing at the black magic she had wrought. With a wave of her arm she had changed a bell into an ink-pot.

'*Clever* Bounce, oh *clever* Bounce!' she said softly. She clapped her inky hands together and said something about a crunjenor. Had I seen? Assuredly I had seen. I couldn't get

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up ; I couldn't get a purchase for my feet on the bare parquet floor. I was helpless.

'Ring the real bell, darling,' I implored.

'Bounce can't,' she said ; 'only uvver bells, on *clever* Bounce !'

'Try, darling, and then Henry will come and buy like a real shop.'

She rose to the bait and rang the bell. Everything she touched bore the ink-marks of her fingers.

Then up the stairs came the welcome sound of footsteps and in came Carter. Crestfallen, Bounce stood under the sorrowful interrogation of his gaze. 'Miss Bounce !' he said. And inky Miss Bounce said nothing. She looked down, then, gradually gaining courage, she raised her eyes and, with the pained solemnity of a convicted puppy, pleaded forgiveness.

'Have you nothing to say, Miss Bounce ?' he asked.

'Fank you *velly, velly* much for the chocolate puddin', dear, dear Tarter,' she lisped, and Carter without a word lifted one by one the treasures from my lap and promised to remove all the ink-marks by the time Mrs. Richard returned.

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I rose, but not in the estimation of my grandchild. I felt I had failed her.

'Bounce is going upstairs,' she announced, deeply hurt. And she went.

'If Mrs. Richard would give me the entire control of the children this sort of thing would never happen,' said Carter.

'You are devoted to children, Carter?' I said.

'I understand them, ma'am, if you will forgive me for saying so.'

I forgave him, remembering at the same time the chocolate-pudding nature of his understanding, and followed Bounce upstairs.

'You don't amuse me,' she said when I appeared at the nursery door, and she climbed up on the window seat and, looking out, she told the sparrows all about her nasty, hollid grannie.

'Vey haven't got a grannie, not one single one,' she said, turning to me at last, her eyebrows drawn into a straight line of dissension. 'Vey *are* glad,' she added, deeply sighing.

I said nothing.

'Not one tiniest, teeniest one and vey never ask God to give them one—never not once.

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Their Nannie says they better because grannies *do* give their little grandchildren fings *sometimes*, but vey won't, because vey are glad vey haven't got one.'

I said nothing.

'Vey *are* glad,' she repeated, and she sighed again very noisily.

Still I said nothing, and for the space of a few seconds there was silence while Bounce looked at me. Then she turned to the window and I heard her whispering; then back again to me.

'I've just asked anuvver little sparrow, a vewy, vewy little one, and he says he has and she is vewy, vewy nice, a vewy kind grannie—only she's *wather* old.'

'Does she give him chocolate pudding?' I asked, seeing an opening and my heart wobbling.

'Nope, his buckler gives him chocolate pudding when he's naughty; he has lots and *once* he was sick.' This on chocolate pudding was worth being.

'What does his grannie do?'

'She tells him stories—*nice* stories.'

She had slipped down from the window seat

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and was standing before me with such a look on her face—irresistible! I held out my arms and she threw herself into them with the whole-hearted forgiveness only a child can bestow on a stupid, obstinate, prejudiced grown-up.

‘What is it to be about, Bounce?’ I asked.

‘About two, three, six, five little dogs—two white, seven black ones and one black spotted one, because he was vewy naughty and rang the bell.’

‘About five little dogs, two white, six black, and one white one spotted with black?’ I said.

‘Because he rang the *fun-ny* bell,’ she said, screwing up her nose and throwing herself backwards in an ecstasy, a most dangerous proceeding.

So I began the story. I had not got far when Bounce told me she had a bruise. She showed it to me. I commiserated with her, whereupon she told me sharply to go on. I went on, and as soon as I had started she suggested a change from little dogs to little boys. Then she professed a preference for little girls. Directly after, for rabbits. Then she said it must be about everything in the whole world—boys and girls and rabbits and kitchen

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tables and cucumber and chocolate and Nannies and sponge cakes and rollers, only not about grannies.—‘Go on—oh, *do* go on.’

I said I couldn’t tell a story about everything in the world because there wouldn’t be time.

‘Would it be tea time?’ she asked hopefully, and I said yes.

‘Then it must have to be about the silly old bears, I suppose,’ she said resignedly, ‘or else about Red Riding Hood—mustn’t it have to be?’ And I said I was afraid so.

‘Must stories always be about those?’ she asked wistfully.

‘Nearly always,’ I answered.

‘Can’t grown-ups tell uvver ones?’

I was going to say some grown-ups could when Nannie came into the room with three balloons bobbing at the ends of their strings.

‘Me?’ cried Bounce, jumping down and clamouring round Nannie.

‘One moment, darling. Have you said thank you to Grannie?’

‘Yeth, yeth, haven’t I?’

I tried to look grave.

‘Has she, ma’am?’ asked Nannie, holding the

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balloons out of Bounce's reach. (She hadn't to hold them very high to be that.)

'She hasn't kissed me,' I said, evading a direct answer.

'Kiss your grannie,' said Nannie.

'I'm vewy busy,' said Bounce.

'Bounce,' said Nannie, looking very grieved.

'Kiss your grannie, darling.'

Reluctantly, with her eye on the balloons, Bounce tendered her cheek. 'No, properly, darling,' said Nannie.

'It was,' said Bounce.

'No, darling.'

'Yeth, darlin',' said Bounce as emphatically, holding out eager hands. 'The blue one, Nannie, I said, bags I, for the blue one last time and it burst—oh, pelease!'

'Kiss your grannie.'

'Please, Nannie,' I said, 'she has.'

'Not properly, ma'am.'

'Oh, bovver,' said Bounce, throwing her arms round my neck and presenting the back of her head to be kissed. 'There,' she sighed. 'Now ve blue vun'—this to Nannie.

Nannie gave her the blue one and Bounce

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turned a radiant face to me. 'Don't you lo-uve balloons?' she gasped.

But grannie was not to be so quickly appeased; not that she resented anything the child had done; but she had been made to appear something of less than a social success in the eyes of Nannie, and punishment had been meted out in the form of a kiss.

'You must amuse yourself now, Gan Gan,' said Bounce, 'because I'm busy.'

'You mustn't say that, darling,' whispered Nannie, and she whispered something else besides.

As I went downstairs Bounce looked through the banisters above me.

'You were *wather* funny, Gan Gan,' she said. Then I heard her say in a very loud and jubilant voice, 'I said it Nannie, *weally* I did, and she didn't listen.'

'Yes I did, Bounce,' I called.

'Nannie, she thays she did,' came Bounce's voice from the end of the passage.

Then all was quiet. Bounce had gone into the nursery and there would be peace until the bursting of the blue balloon. After that——!

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I went on my way feeling curiously lonely and not a little ashamed. It seemed to me that two very big people had been bullying one very small child. Or had one small child been bullying one old woman? I would rather have it so.

'Was Bounce good?' asked Anna when she came in.

I said Bounce had been very patient and very interesting. Anna said she wished she could find troublesome children that. She didn't understand them and it was no use pretending she did. 'And I do try so hard,' she added pathetically.

'Tell me about Guy,' I said. 'How did he go off to school? Quite happily?'

Anna said he took it all perfectly naturally, even the first time. It appeared that Carter had told him all about it then. 'He is a most extraordinary man,' said Anna. 'He came to me a few days before Guy went and said, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but before Master Guy goes to school, wouldn't it be as well to tell him what his father is?"'

'I asked Carter what he meant and he said, "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but the first question one young gentleman asks another when they get

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to school is, What 's your father ? " So at luncheon I took the opportunity of asking Guy if he knew what his father was. " *Rather,*" he said, browsing away, " I 'now all right what dad is."

' Well, what ?

" Dad ? " he paused, " oh, he 's a bachelor."

Anna was surprised I could enjoy that ; she thought it so stupid, and so very awkward too, with the men servants in the room.

' I suppose, grannie,' said Anna, ' you took your own children seriously ? '

How seriously Anna took hers I discovered on a Sunday morning when it was too wet for them to go to church. She gathered them around her for a Bible lesson. There was a frown of perplexity on her face. It was reflected on Freddy's. He knew he wasn't going to understand. He started critical of his mother's teaching, but meant to be very, very good and attentive.

Anna began by showing them pictures in a large book. She stood it, end up, on her lap, facing the children, so that all could see.

It appeared that no one could see. ' More this way, mum,' they said with kindly encourage-

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ment; 'that's better. Now what is it supposed to be?'

'It——'

'Oh, I know,' said Freddy. 'Of course, Bounce, you see. It's Abram and Isaac . . . But, mum, *why* did Abram—I mean, why did God *want* Abram to cook Isaac?'

'Don't be naughty, Freddy,' said Anna, turning hurriedly to a picture of Daniel in the den of lions.

Now I knew Freddy had no intention of being naughty.

Bounce sighed heavily as she looked at the picture. 'I do *love* it,' she said, almost dribbling with joy, 'the darlin' and lions. Don't you, Freddy?'

But Freddy was suffering in silence under a strong sense of injustice. I was glad to see he had the strength to do it.

'Now, Bounce,' asked her mother, 'why did they go early in the morning to the den of lions?'

'To see if Daniel had eaten ve poor lions,' said Bounce sorrowfully.

I stole out of the room. I hadn't the nerve to

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stay. I suppose my children used to ask questions as difficult to answer; but I was younger then and could better face the ordeal.

'All right, grannie,' said Freddy cheerfully, 'you needn't go. Mum will soon tell us to get down and run away; she always does when we haven't half done.'

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XV

WHEN Freddy suggested I should take him 'somewhere' I remembered the occasion on which I had taken him and Bounce to a children's play. What happened was something to this effect.

The curtain went up. The scene was a wood ; in the foreground a child was lying asleep.

'Is he *really* dead ?' asked Freddy in a hoarse whisper.

'Oh no, darling, not dead, only asleep.'

'Why is he ?'

'Wait and see.'

'What ? See what ?'

'Are vey real birds in the tree ?' asked Bounce.

'They haven't all got wings,' said Freddy.

'Some of them have, darling,' I said.

'Mustn't *all* birds have ?' asked Freddy.

'*Vat* have vey ?' asked Bounce.

'All of them haven't,' chipped in Freddy.

'No, darling,' I said.

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‘Have they?’

‘No, darling.’

‘Was “No, darling” to me or to Bounce?’ asked Freddy, leaning across me.

‘To both, darling,’ I said.

‘Is he weally dead, poor little boy?’ said Bounce.

‘Grannie said he *wasn’t*, Bounce,’ said Freddy severely.

‘You didn’t, did you, Gan Gan?’ said Bounce, leaning heavily from the other side, and she and Freddy met across me.

‘No, darling,’ I assured her, ‘he isn’t dead.’

‘Why isn’t he?’—this both together.

‘Well, darlings . . .’

‘Well what?’

This kind of thing went on until the curtain fell, when a free fight ensued between Freddy and Bounce. With difficulty I separated them. Then Bounce said she must put on her hat. ‘I look lovely in my hat, don’t I?’ she asked in her far-carrying voice. ‘Don’t I, Gan Gan?’

I said she did.

‘May I look at the people?’ she said, seizing my glasses; and, looking at the audience immedi-

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ately around her, she made remarks about them, to the amusement of some, who laughed, but another from behind me not amused said 'Hush!' and Bounce frowned at her. To frown better she knelt on the seat of her stall and continued to frown until the curtain went up. The stage was in darkness.

'What is it supposed to be?' hoarsely whispered Freddy.

'It's dark, darling, so we can't see.'

'*Why* is it?—when it's light shall we see?'

'Will it always be dark like vis?' whispered Bounce; 'won't vere *even* be a night-light? Has veir Nannie gone to Brixton?'

'Ah-h!' a sigh from Freddy, 'it's light *now*, Bounce'—this kindly.

'I can see without you tellin' me,' she said snappishly.

And so on.

I took them to the immortal *Peter Pan*, and when Hook said 'Nobody loves me,' Bounce rose in her seat and said in her high-pitched voice, vibrant with feeling, '*I will love you.*' It was a delicious impulse on her part and I am told set a fashion, but it makes me anxious for her future

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and Anna must look well to the young men she asks to the house.

When Peter Pan is cast away and apparently lost for ever Bounce wept bitterly, but consented to be comforted by a little boy who leant over from behind her and said, 'He doesn't die—truthfully he doesn't.'

'Promise?' sobbed Bounce.

'Faithfully I promise, *at least* he doesn't generally.'

'No, he never does, Tommy,' said an elder sister, 'so you *can* promise.'

'I say'—this to Bounce—'it's all right, he never does. Mary says so.'

The mother of that little boy too must look to *his* future. He showed a heart over tender to a woman in distress, and that the woman was only four and a bit and himself six and another bit didn't make it any the safer.

Another danger signal was hoisted by Freddy when he threw his arms round the wax figure of a baby in the children's outfitting department at Harrod's. As I coaxed Freddy away, a pretty woman passing said, 'How anxious that child's mother should be.'

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His grandmother felt the anxiety ; but she knew that with age would probably come, if not discrimination, at least discretion.

Well, those were winter things, but they were fresh in my memory when Freddy suggested I should take them somewhere during that summer visit of mine. So fresh were they that Bounce said ' Say yes ' twice before I finally committed myself to a picnic so soon as I got home. The suggestion was received with acclamations on all sides.

' A nicpic,' said Bounce under her breath.

' *Picnic*, darlin', ' said Freddy.

' Nicpic,' said Bounce just as firmly ; ' Gan Gan said so, *didunt* you ? ' turning to me.

' Picnic, darling.'

' There,' said Bounce triumphantly ; ' nicpic ; she said so.'

She walked away murmuring, ' *nicpic—nicpic—NICPIC.*' She went out of the room with her head round the door and said, ' Nicpic.' Freddy didn't know it, but at that moment he had it in his heart to kill poor Bounce ; poor Bounce didn't know it either.

' She's only a baby, Freddy,' I pleaded.

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'She's four and a half, *struck*,' said Freddy furiously; 'if she can't be decent *now* when ever will she be? Never, I should think! Nannie says I must pray for her to be made good; but what's the use? God couldn't do it if He tried. He can't even make a fine day when we go to the Zoo. She trod on my chocolate cream yesterday on purpose—and then she said I might eat it off her shoe. . . . I didn't, at first.'

'Did you afterwards, Freddy?' I asked in horror.

'Well, I did because she would have if I hadn't, so I did to pay her out. . . . It tasted all right, only it *is* hard to have your chocolate creams trodden on.' I quite agreed with him. It seemed to me the heavy foot of fate.

While I was staying with Dick and Anna, an aunt of Anna's died. She had been particularly fond of Freddy and had showered presents upon him. His father broke to him the news of her death; Freddy listened, looking very solemn and, I thought, somewhat awed. I was touched to see how much feeling the child showed. Then he said rather cheerfully, but not too hopefully, 'No chance of her rising again, I suppose?'

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XVI

WHEN in London I determined to go to the War Office and discover for myself what manner of man was Ian Forres. It was not a subject I could discuss with Dick, because he could see no reason why Patricia should want to marry any man. Anna could see none why she should want to marry any but a rich one, and as I was determined she should marry the man she loved—if he were a good man—I was going to find out all about him. When I discovered that the man in high office to whom I must apply had been known to me years before, my grandmotherly heart rejoiced. That was a difficulty surmounted at once. I had been assured I should only see a subordinate and I was determined no subordinate would do for me. Ready with a secret code to be used if necessary, I went and demanded to see the Chief.

I was politely requested to put my business in writing. I as politely declined to put my

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business in writing. Still more politely was I urged to do so. As politely I declined. Finally under compulsion I wrote 'l.b.w. b. dog boy, 99,' and handed it to my inquisitor. Whether he read it or not I cannot tell. All I know is that a few minutes later I stood face to face with a grey-haired man whom I had known when he had no grey hairs. He had played cricket at Winthorpe. At Winthorpe he had won his match and had lost something else. At Winthorpe he had broken his collar bone and, he had thought, his heart. In a sunny bay window at Winthorpe I had had something to do with the mending of both his collar bone and his heart. That had been many years ago, but it accounted for the smile with which he welcomed me.

'I thought it must be you,' he said, pushing aside a pile of papers and rising to meet me.

'Then you remembered me, Sir Wil——'

'No, please, not that!'

'Billy? Well, Billy.'

'Billy, please. What can I do for you? Let me see—Ralph, was it?'

'Yes; Ralph, Dick, Hugh, Cynthia, Bettine and Claudia.'

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‘Yes, yes,’ he said smiling, ‘I remember *some* of them.’ He settled himself in his chair. ‘Is it Hugh?’

I said it was none of my sons, but a son’s daughter.

‘Your granddaughter? What can I do for her? I have a daughter.’ He smiled as leaning forward he drew with his pen, I presumed, a daughter on the blotting-paper. ‘She is eight,’ he confided.

I said my granddaughter was eighteen. ‘A dangerous age,’ he said smiling, giving his daughter surprisingly long eyelashes.

‘A very dangerous age and a very dangerous person,’ I admitted.

‘That I can believe. Until I had a daughter of my own, I didn’t realise at what an early age they begin to be dangerous. It is curious how they undermine one’s sense of right and wrong, how much more convincing their illogical arguments are than ours. Did your granddaughter’s mother run very well?’ and he added long legs, long black legs, to his picture on the blotting-paper.

‘No, that was Cynthia.’

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‘ I remember her.’

‘ This is Dick’s girl.’

‘ Dick—let me see. Dick ? Was it Dick whose trousers—— ? ’

‘ Yes, that was Dick. Well, it’s his girl and it’s no use making a secret of it.’

‘ I had none from you at Winthorpe, had I ? ’ he asked.

‘ I should like to believe that. Well, a young man loves her, and very naturally I want to know what manner of a young man he is. You are the person to know, and I believe the person who will tell me what you know.’

‘ Ah ! ’

‘ Could you tell me ? ’

‘ It is of course my business to judge of men as soldiers—not lovers.’

‘ But when your daughter loves a soldier, shall you judge of him as a soldier only or as a man ? ’

‘ He must be a good man, but he mustn’t be a bad soldier. Who is the young man ? ’

I told him. He frowned.

‘ A good soldier undoubtedly,’ he said. ‘ As a soldier I can vouch for him, as a young man of

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grit and determination I can vouch for him. One day he waited eight hours to see me. He was told when he called that I was out. He asked when I should be in and was told in time to dress for dinner. He said he would wait. It was then eleven o'clock in the morning. I came in at seven in the evening and found him. He had waited all day and apparently hadn't smoked. He got what he wanted, of course. It was an African expedition. I asked him if he could start the next day and he said yes, he could, and he did. He's that sort of young man.'

'Then if he wants my Patricia he'll have her.'

'I should say undoubtedly. The wicked thing is—forgive the heresy, dear Mrs. Legraye—the wretched thing is, that your Patricia should get so valuable a soldier. A master of fox hounds would have done just as well for her. He has no business to marry—none.'

'You married,' I ventured.

'I met my wife,' he said simply, as if that were explanation enough. 'What do you want to know about Ian Forres?'

I said in my most simple and grandmotherly

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manner that I wanted to know if he was good enough to marry my Patricia.

'My dear Mrs. Tegrave, I can tell you that without asking any one—of course he's not. Is any man good enough to marry our daughters? or our granddaughters? I wonder the thought of that hasn't been a better man of every man long ago. Wait

He took up the receiver of the telephone and said, 'Is that you, Campbell?' Naturally I did not hear the answer. Then, 'D'you know Ian Forres personally?'

I guessed the answer to be Yes.

'Well?'

The answer must have been, Very well.

'Is he—' the General paused, smiled, and chose the word—'straight?'

There was evidently a hesitation in the answer and the General laughed. 'Would you let him marry your granddaughter?' he asked. Then quickly, 'All?' then quickly again, 'Love him?' I could not guess what had come between the two questions.

'Thanks,' and the General replaced the receiver. Then, turning to me he said, 'Captain

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Campbell says he would be only too thankful if Forres married all his granddaughters, if he had any. Judging by the warmth of his expressions I should say Forres is as good a friend as he is a soldier. But I must warn you—Campbell says all women love him—Forres.'

'That perhaps is not his fault,' I suggested.

'Nor perhaps his particular virtue,' said Sir William. 'It may be an uncomfortable accident of fortune,' he added.

'I should like to meet your wife, Sir—Billy,' I said. Then I knew—a look—and it flashed upon me! I held out my hand. 'Forgive me. You *must* forgive the stupidity of an old woman who lives buried in the country, and who looks up her generals in the Army List. An official list has no heart.'

He took my hand. 'You can do this for me. Ask my little girl to meet your granddaughter. She will need a woman friend, principally because I am afraid she will never want to make one. She is naturally so much with men that she understands them better than women. As a protest against governesses she calls hers Bobbie. A young married woman—so long as she is the right

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sort—is what she will need by and by, and Mrs. Ian Forbes should be the very person.'

I felt dismissed. He came to the door with me. Why did you remember that the dog boy bowled me?' he asked, smiling.

'Because it was, I imagine, the happiest day of his life.'

'Was it? I imagine my servant had something to say to the spoiling of it. He had put his money on my century. They were jolly days.'

As I went out of the door a young man, coming in, ran up against me and would have knocked me down if he hadn't as promptly picked me up. It was all so quickly done that I had not time to be frightened, although I had plenty of time to discover that the young man was very charming to look at and had the most delightful way of accusing himself of all the clumsy crimes in the world and an extraordinary eloquence in craving forgiveness of them. Of course I forgave him. What after all had he done that he hadn't at once rectified, and with such good grace?

He insisted on seeing me into a taxi and

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on driving with me. 'Where shall I say?' he asked.

And I said Harrod's, because I wanted to go there on my way back to Cadogan Square, and it was the only place I could think of at the moment.

'You are very brown,' I ventured, looking at my companion. It was perhaps an odd way to talk to a stranger, but it was the only thing I had to say.

He explained he had just come back from abroad. He had been going—when he had nearly knocked me down—to report himself at the War Office.

I said I thought he ought to tell me his name and he told me it was Forres—just as I expected he would.

'Ian?' I suggested.

'Yes, why?'

'Only because I am Patricia's grandmother.'

Whereupon what did this surprising young man do but kiss me, and it seemed perfectly right and natural that he should, and from that moment we were entirely at ease with one another, and I felt I knew him as well as he professed to know me. It was delightful.

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‘Grannie for granted, of course,’ he said. ‘I knew it must be. I know all about you—what you have been to Patricia all her dear little life. Now I too am going to take you for granted—your love—your interest—your encouragement—and I am going especially to take for granted that you will do what you can for me during what promises to be a very difficult time. I think you know Patricia cares for me. How much I care for her is not possible to put into words, so I shall not try. There are more things on earth than grandmothers to be taken for granted. But the difficulty is this: although I never had any prospect of being a rich man, I had every reason to suppose I should never be a very poor one. I must own my father has hinted at money difficulties for some time, and for that very reason I had not definitely asked Patricia to marry me, although it was, I think, perfectly understood between us. Then again, I knew we had a very worldly mother to overcome. Mrs. Legraye is that?’

I nodded.

‘Well, not long ago a thunderbolt was hurled into my camp, literally into my camp. I got a

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letter from my father saying my allowance must stop from the date of his writing, that his affairs had panned out much worse than he had expected. You can imagine what I felt. The first thing I did was to write an involved, ambiguous sort of a letter to Patricia, hinting——'

'Yes,' I laid my hand on his knee, 'I know.'

The smell of new-mown hay came back to me, and I heard Patricia reading out to me just those ambiguous passages hinting at horrible possibilities.

'Well,' he continued, 'I got leave and followed my wretched letter as quickly as I could. Tomorrow I am going north to get to the bottom of this bad business. If it is as bad as my father makes out, I must leave the Service and make money somehow, and I want you to keep Patricia for me—if you think it fair—because I'm most des—ridiculously fond of her.'

'Patricia will need no guardian of her faith,' I said; 'the child is in just as—ridiculous—a state herself. Does she know you are in England?'

'No; I thought it best to say nothing until I knew how much I may say. I have arranged

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with a friend to telegraph from Southampton saying I am arriving there, when I have been north. It's a little complicated; but it will prepare her.'

I asked him if it was known at the War Office that he was returning, and when he said Yes, I realised how loyal men are to one another—even generals to their very much juniors.

'Where are we?' I asked.

He looked out of the window and said it looked very like dear old Putney Hill. 'I told the man just to drive on,' he explained.

It was dear old Putney Hill, and I had never thought to love it so well.

'But,' I said, 'I *must* ask you to tell him to drive back to Cadogan Square,' which he did, and, arrived at Cadogan Square, the first thing I saw was Patricia standing on the doorstep. She looked so lovely, so delicious and so lonely, and wore a hat so becoming, that I said to Ian, 'Stay where you are,' to Patricia, 'Jump in, darling,' and to the taxi-man, 'Drive on.'

It was done. After all it was a simple enough thing to do—and the only thing a grandmother could do. And I stood on the doorstep feeling

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the wickedest and the happiest old woman in London.

When Carter opened the door I had not the courage to look at him, and I felt so shaky that he took my arm and helped me over the doormat. 'We can't always remain young, Carter,' I said in extenuation.

'No, ma'am, and those that are should make the most of it,' and I thought of my happy lovers speeding up dear old Putney Hill.

At the bottom of the staircase I was met by Freddy.

'I've composed a new tune to "Around the throne of God in Heaven,"' he said. 'You can try to play it—if you like.'

'Thank you, darling,' I said.

'It's lunch time. D'you know if Patsy's in?' I thought not.

'And it's her favourite pudding,' he said sadly.

'Poor, darlin' Patsy,' echoed Bounce, 'it's her fav'rite pood—' she jumped the bottom step—'din. Did you see me?'

At the end of luncheon Anna awoke to the fact that Patricia's place was empty. 'Carter, where is Miss Patricia?' she asked.

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‘Lunching with Mrs. Vane, I believe, ma’am,’ said Carter.

‘Is she lunching with Bettine?’ Anna asked, turning to me.

I said I expected Carter knew, and I wondered how much.

‘Go and ring up Mrs. Vane, Carter, and ask if Miss Patricia is there.’

He went, and returned to say Miss Patricia was lunching with Mrs. Vane and Mrs. Vane would see Miss Patricia safely home.

I looked at Carter. His face was without expression. In answer to my look he handed me toast.

When Bettine brought Patricia safely back the door opened to admit a radiance that filled the house. It seemed unsafe to let it shine in Anna’s drawing-room, where the blinds are always half drawn, and I expected to see Anna blink. So much so that I took Patricia to my room (I had other reasons), and she threw her arms round my neck (that was one of the reasons) and we laughed a little and we cried a little; then she sat down so that I might look at her. I looked, and when I saw her eyes, like stars shining, I beheld as it were

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a new earth and the promise of a new heaven, and I was ready to fight for that look in the child's eyes. Then she told me that she and *he* thought it was quite honest to keep 'it' from her father and mother until *he* had seen his father. 'And as *you* know,' she added.

'There 's your father, Patricia,' I said, knowing how much he loved her. 'He loves you so.'

'Yes, that 's just it, he loves me dreadfully, but not as you do, grannie.'

'More wisely, perhaps.'

'Not exactly that, darling; but the great difference is that you were married to Grannie-Man while father has been married to mother. It makes all, all the difference.'

And of course it did. There was no use denying it.

So it was arranged; but why Dick and Anna did not guess I cannot imagine. Unless it is that God walks in the garden and few of us see Him; He plays in the slums and few of us know it; He talks to us and we do not recognise His voice. To some of us it is the voice of a little child calling—and so it may be.

When Anna was told she tried hard to pull

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down the blinds, to shut out the sun. But before she was told I had other things to distract me. One was a letter from Jordan Rivers. That did not surprise me; he had the promise of my votes to thank me for. But as I read the letter I found therein no mention of votes. What I did find was a constant reference to grandmothers, to young mothers. These filled me with horror, and I had not read far before I realised what had happened. I had posted the outpouring of my soul. I felt particularly hot when I remembered an unnecessarily intimate reference to a first-born.

‘I do see,’ he wrote, ‘what you mean about grandmothers, and of course children are bound to be a great anxiety to their parents, even the best of them. But does the young mother take herself so seriously as you did in your day? Judging by the newspapers and illustrated papers, I have formed rather a different opinion. But as I draw most of my information from such sources, it is probably not fair to judge. I am very interested in what you write of your old nurse. Is she not a rare type nowadays? Also what you say of your daughter-in-law is charming.

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What photograph is it your daughter has ? The one in flannels, I expect ! Why did no one insist on my having my hair cut ? I am starting immediately for home.'

What would Claudia say ? The thought troubled me.

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XVII

HAVE you ever been to buy a hat with a friend who thinks all shapes wicked that are even remotely fashionable, all shapes unladylike, except those of the kind worn by herself and by her mother before her?

There is one thing to remember in buying a hat, and that is that the big shape of one year becomes in course of time the toque of another, or the other way round.

Miss Cherry wanted a new hat, and the need of it came upon her while I was in London and she confessed to a liking for my taste in hats—which I resented—and she wrote to know if I would go with her to help her to choose. It is not often the chance falls to one at my age, and I was perhaps a little flattered and determined to show Miss Cherry I had other ideas than boat-shaped ones—in hats.

It was further arranged that Don't should come up with Miss Cherry. They were to lunch

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with Bettine, at whose house I was to meet them. Anna said, why didn't they lunch with her? But Anna wouldn't have made poor little Miss Cherry feel at home. She would have noticed every wrinkle in the back of her coat and would probably have recommended her a very expensive tailor. But with Bettine Miss Cherry would feel the greatest social success. She would marvel at her own wit and wonder why she didn't go out more when she was so very amusing! So to Bettine's I went, and there I found Don't and Miss Cherry already arrived. As a matter of fact Don't (after the manner of the Lullingtons) was on the staircase with something to say. 'Darling Mrs. Legraye, I should die if I didn't see you first to break it to you.'

'Break what?' I asked in alarm.

'Only something perfectly heavenly that happened to the Cherubim in the train. You know she has been taken for many things in her day, don't you? A maiden aunt often, and once a clergyman's wife, and twice a mother. Well, this morning she was early in her corner seat when Mr. Bathos came to the carriage door, of the train I mean, and the dear blind thing couldn't of

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course see, but he's so clever at recognising voices, and when Mrs. Soames said, "Good morning, Mr. Bathos, are you going to town?" he said, "Good morning, Mrs. Soames, I will come and sit beside you. Wait one moment while I remove this bundle of rugs," and he removed the darling little Cherubim!

Don't hugged me violently to give vent to her joy and I begged her to be quiet. 'She will hear you,' I whispered.

'No, she won't; she is telling Bettine all about it. Poor darling Bettine was getting pinker every minute when I left the room. We must rescue her.'

Don't opened the drawing-room door and on the sofa sat Bettine and Miss Cherry, Bettine looking at the limit of her endurance. Miss Cherry had just said, 'Do I look like it?' and Bettine was saying in her most comforting voice, 'To a *blind* man you might——'

'Well, dear Miss Cherry,' I said, sitting beside her, 'you have come to town to shop?'

'Dear Mrs. Legraye, yes; but how much more than a day's shopping has already befallen me!'

She dropped her voice and hurriedly told me

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the whole story. 'Wasn't it terrible? Even Don't was quite upset; quite hysterical! Then another thing befell me at Harrod's—a strange woman put her arms round my neck—from behind. It was a great shock when I turned and confronted a complete stranger.'

Don't, from the window, said, 'She was such a nice-looking woman, Mrs. Legraye, it didn't matter, did it? I wish she had done it to me.'

'That, Louisa,' said Miss Cherry, 'is not the point. What troubles me is this—what sort of a woman is she for whom I was mistaken? Is she a good Christian, God-fearing woman, quiet in her dress, or is she giddy and frivolous?'

Don't paused and thought a moment, then said that if the woman had not been all those things her back couldn't have borne so striking a resemblance to Miss Cherry's, because although it was possible that a smart back might not always have a pretty face to it, a really good, pure back always went with a good pure face. 'It is curious, and no one knows why, but there are backs that make one think of church, good works, curates and bumpily rolled umbrellas. It's strange, but it's true.'

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Miss Cherry said she had a very neat back when she was young.

'And a charming face, now that you are not so young,' I said, patting her hand.

In the afternoon we all went shopping. It was Miss Cherry's ambition to shop in a big shop. She explained that she never had the courage to enter one alone. So to a big shop, in the immediate neighbourhood of Sloane Street, we went. We discovered from vague hints softly breathed by Miss Cherry that it was ~~just~~ ^{exactly} ~~what~~ ^{very} she wanted, 'of an intimate nature,' she whispered.

Now in small shops, if you ask for buttons, Bettine says the shopwalker calls 'Haby forward,' and in time you get buttons. Not so in big shops. If you ask for buttons you are promptly given a chair. We were each given a chair and Don't asked Miss Cherry what she wanted in particular. Miss Cherry, turning a pink little face towards us, whispered that it was a man. 'That she wanted?' asked Don't, puzzled.

'It's a man,' whispered Miss Cherry, indicating with a nod the patient waiting figure standing behind the counter. Bettine whispered that it was all right; they always were men in big

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shop). Miss Cherry whispered back that she wanted buttons. Then Bettine in her most encouraging voice assured her she needn't mind giving utterance to the word button. Whereupon Miss Cherry in desperation, pulling Bettine towards her, said in a whisper loud enough for us all to hear that it was *linen* buttons.

By this time the excellent young man behind the counter had fetched a young woman, who produced buttons at once without flinching. Miss Cherry, shielding the cards from the public gaze with one cotton-gloved hand, chose the size she wanted. Don't was delirious with delight, and Bettine and I agreed that until she could learn to enjoy herself less she ought not to go out.

Miss Cherry supposed young women were kept for the purpose.

'Of what?' asked Don't.

'For the purpose of selling those things of which men *should* know nothing.'

Then came the choosing of the hat. Bettine whispered to me that she was afraid London couldn't produce it, but Don't, overhearing, said a small shop *might*. So to one of what Bettine calls her 'haunts' we went.

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When we got inside the shop Miss Cherry said to me, 'You say!' which took me straight back to the days of my childhood and to the childhood of my children. I demurred. 'You!' said Miss Cherry, pushing Bettine forward. And Bettine told the young woman, who was only too anxious to serve us, that it was a hat the lady wanted—a quiet hat.

There seemed to be every kind and shape of straw hats piled on shelves and on the floor. Those on the floor made an edifice of extraordinary instability, the summit of which Don't touched and the whole thing collapsed. 'It must be for wet Sundays,' said Don't, busily rebuilding the pile and enjoying it.

The young woman ran her eyes up and down Miss Cherry—that didn't take long—and up again, when she fixed them on the hat she was wearing. 'Similar to the one you are wearing, madam?' And Miss Cherry asked her if it were likely she should buy a new hat if the one she had would do?

We tried trimmed hats without success. Bettine then suggested choosing a shape and having it trimmed.

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I took the opportunity to suggest to Miss Cherry that she had come to the shop rather with the idea of getting a hat similar to the one she was wearing, whereupon she explained that she had never seen herself in three glasses at the same time before, and consequently had never known how odd she looked, so she had now changed her mind.

The patient young woman brought a multitude of shapes, but one was too high, one too broad, one too large, one too narrow, another too worldly, another too smart, and so on through them all.

I sat down and waited. On Miss Cherry's tiny head were placed one after the other the shapes, until I wondered how any one could wear anything so absurd as a hat. Bettine suggested putting something on the hat to give an idea of what it would look like trimmed.

The patient young woman murmured something about a 'mount,' and returned with a flat basket tray full of feathers. 'Dead hens!' said Miss Cherry, 'what have they done that I should glory in their indignity?'

Ribbon was suggested. 'A pompom?' ventured the young woman.

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'The pompoms and vanities of this wicked world,' murmured Don't. Miss Cherry said if they were called *that* it was no use bringing them.

'This is a pretty hat,' said Don't gaily, seizing one that lay on the counter. 'Really pretty, so nice and quiet, just like you Cherubim, darlin'.' She held it up for our inspection, and as she did so, over her shoulder stretched a black hand—not a black-gloved hand, but the bare black hand of a black woman. 'That's mine, miss, thank you,' said its ebony owner. It was some minutes before Don't recovered from this. Then it seemed time to settle on something, so a black boat-shaped hat was chosen. It was to be trimmed with a flat bow in front—no, at the side. When Don't exclaimed that it was exactly like the one the Cherubim was wearing, Miss Cherry asked what other hat Don't supposed she would wear? It was the only shape a Christian woman, with her shaped face, could wear.

The bill came to nine and elevenpence-half-penny. 'Enough too!' said Miss Cherry. 'However, it will *last*; and perhaps it is not exorbitant for a covering from the storm and a

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shade from the burning sun, and it won't set a bad example in the village, and that after all is the first thing to think of in choosing a hat. Nothing else matters !'

As we left the shop Bettine said she was sorry we had given so much trouble. 'No trouble, miss,' said the young woman, who added, 'That's what I'm paid for,' and she sighed.

But Don't said we mustn't worry about the girl, because she wore a gold ring with two hearts intertwined, and that meant a young man and Sunday to look forward to.

Bettine has reduced shopping to a fine art—not in getting for herself the best, but of giving of herself the best. And it comes much to the same thing. When she buys anything the girl behind the counter becomes, for the moment, her friend and confidante. Their interests are identical. Bettine does not buy seven-eighths of a yard of anything without explaining why she wants that absurd and ridiculous length, which leads to horrible mazes of calculations on the back of the poor girl's bill book. Can a greater cruelty be conceived than that of never satisfying a perfectly legitimate curiosity, which must go to the

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making of the true saleswoman, and without which she is of no account ?

When Bettine first married she gave Derek a set of pearl studs the size of very small bread crumbs. She saw them in a shop window and, with her eye on that window, she started to save the money to buy them. The money saved, she was outside the shop so early in the morning that the shutters weren't down. So she waited. And when a very small boy took them down she helped him to do it, then went into the shop and bought the very small studs.

I imagine that so long as she lives she will never forget buying those pearl bread crumbs. That is nothing ! I dare say every woman remembers the first present she gave her husband, saved out of the house-keeping money—certainly he does. But how many shopmen remember selling that present ? That is the art to which Bettine has brought shopping. The selling becomes to the seller as great a thrill as is the buying to the buyer, and as living a memory. And Bettine pays, mind you !

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XVIII

WHEN he was very small Putts announced one day that he had a loose headache in his hands, by which he meant to say that his gloves were too large. Could he have expressed it better ?

When I had been in London some time, I found I had a tight headache in my feet and deep headache in my heart whenever I thought of my garden, so I said goodbye to Bettine, to Anna, to Dick, to Patricia, to Freddy and Bounce and Primula (of whom I have told nothing). And I wrote a line to Claudia to tell her to expect me, and home I went, with joy in my heart and an aching longing to see my garden, which got better directly I buried my nose in a pink rose and Speedwell buried my hand in his dear horny one. I knew then that one cannot live with grandchildren alone. In future they must come to me.

'Are you tired of grandchildren ?' asked Claudia kindly as we paced up and down the soft, delicious, grass path between the flower borders.

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‘Not of them; but of London, very, very tired.’

‘But they did tire you a little?’ she persisted.

I admitted it, just a little. ‘They walked faster than I wanted to walk.’ Claudia slowed down as I said that, and I pressed her arm within mine and walked a little faster just to show her that she had not outpaced me. ‘They talked a little too fast,’ I added. ‘I am getting old, Claudia, that’s it,’ and she answered that I was the youngest person in the world, which reminded me so vividly of Patricia and her sweet exaggerations that I felt guilty, knowing what I was hiding from Claudia.

‘Quite the youngest,’ she repeated; ‘but you must go to bed early for all that.’ And early to bed I went, quite content to be managed, indeed I had missed it. Besides there is no place so safe as bed for a widow when she dares not talk. I had two secrets to keep from Claudia when it is no easy thing to keep one.

She sat at the end of my bed waiting for me to tell her everything. Is there anything more paralyzing?

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'You're thin, darling,' she said. 'Have you been worried?'

I said not in the least.

'Not by Bettine, of course, but Patricia? Is her love affair prospering?'

I said she was very happy and that I was very sleepy.

'Yes, darling, you are . . . but Patricia . . . from what I hear, he is . . . well I don't know whether he is a flirt exactly, but . . . Are you asleep?'

'Yes, darling,' I murmured.

'Dear humbug,' said Claudia kissing me, and by the very tenderness of her kiss I knew she knew I had something to hide, and was pitying me for finding it so difficult to be strong.

I lay awake a long time, then, committing Patricia's secret into God's safe keeping until morning, I fell asleep.

'Now, darling,' said Claudia briskly next morning at breakfast, 'there is, of course, something you are not going to tell me. It is about Patricia, I know, and she is, I am sure, engaged; but I am not going to worry you. You are perfectly right not to tell, if you have promised not to, only don't

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be frightened of me. I won't try to find out anything. You can ask me for the toast or for more coffee or anything else, with perfect safety. Then you can escape into the garden and enjoy yourself ; but try not to tell Speedwell.'

I had not to keep my secret long, for within a week came a budget of letters from Cadogan Square. The one from Patricia I opened first.

'DARLING DARLING,—They know and have borne it better than I expected. Daddy was too darling for words—in fact he couldn't say anything. But he looks at me as if I were some strange and ridiculous little animal that he rather loves and wouldn't frighten for worlds. He only wonders what it is going to do next, and he is a little afraid of it. Mummy can't understand at all. She tried very hard to make daddy say No, but he couldn't. Who could, when they see how happy I am? Darling "Grannie for Granted," I can take everything for granted now, for nothing so really wonderful can ever happen to me again. If this can be true, what can there be in the world too good to be true? Didn't you love him directly you saw him? Most women

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do, and don't you understand it—and forgive them? You dearest, youngest, most adorable and understanding of older mothers than mine. Love this child as much as she loves you, and to ask you to do that is to ask a great deal. Ian loves you as much as I do—nearly.—Your loving,
'PATRICIA.'

Then I opened Anna's.

'DEAREST GRANNIE,—So you knew all the time! Was it quite fair? I can't help feeling Patricia has thrown herself away. Not that he isn't charming; but Patricia is so very attractive. She might surely have done better. She has no idea of economy and looks upon the whole thing as a delightful joke. I tell her it is *not* the spirit in which to approach matrimony. It is by no means all fun. She might have seen that for herself. I am sure I have done everything possible for Dick, and even you must know he is very difficult at times. Over this engagement for instance, he is impossible! He hates it, yet won't allow me to say a word against it. He is jealous of Ian, and yet, as a father, he has no right to be jealous. I believe he would be just the same if

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Ian were a rich man. It is too absurd. I dislike the engagement because in my love for the child I should have liked her to do better; but she is absolutely happy. He dislikes it because he doesn't want her to marry at all. I am rather upset about the whole thing. Ian says you were upset at first—were you? What changed your opinion? It can't be for two years at least.'

Two years! The idea of keeping two young things waiting two years. Anna was inhuman.

I opened Dick's letter.

'DARLING MOTHER,—Of course you have heard, in fact so far as I can gather you have known all along. Well, the child is deliriously happy and it's absurd of Anna to think she can do anything. So there it is! Of course I am delighted the child is so happy; but Heaven knows why she couldn't have waited. Surely she might have been happy at home a little longer! There is, of course, the money difficulty. How they will manage on what he has, and on what I can give Patricia, I don't know. But Patricia has it all cut and dried and is deep in account books. She has a wonderful friend who has kept a record of all the dinners she

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has given her lucky husband all the years they have been married. Piles of little books! When Patricia isn't looking at them, Anna counts up how many times on an average these people dine out in the year. Wonderful woman, isn't she? Such extraordinary things interest her. Bounce is frightfully important and is trying to take Patricia's place. She gets frightfully in the way. She is so horribly near the ground. I never see her till she squeals "Mind, daddy." I don't know why she should be so small for her size.'

'Dear old Dick,' said Claudia as she read the letter, 'I don't suppose he realises how selfish he is.'

I said perhaps it was hardly that.

'Darling, of course you must stand up for your children. But I am afraid the fact remains.'

A few days later I got another letter from Anna, evidently written in great haste under considerable excitement.

'DEAREST GRANNIE,—There has been a terrible upset. You remember Mr. James P. Carter? Of course you *knew* him! Well, he has come over

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to England to start big works in the north—an enormous concern. He met Ian the other night and apparently was enormously impressed by him—as every one is. Well, to make a long story short, he approached Ian with a view to taking him into the business. Ian told Dick, and Dick, of course, asked Mr. Carter to dinner. Well, he came. I liked him so much. He's frightfully rich—that, of course, is not why I liked him—and after dinner Patricia and I left the dining-room and Dick winked at me. I was pleased, because he so seldom does that kind of thing. I knew what they were going to discuss; but apparently Patricia did not. She sat with me in the drawing-room and studied her account book. At last the men came up. Dick came in first looking rather excited, I thought. Then Ian came in with Mr. Carter, and went straight up to Patricia, sat down and put his hand over her open book and looked at her, as he *does* look at her.

“On what basis of income are you calculating, Patsy?” asked her father. And Patricia said, “Nine hundred a year,” and Dick laughed. Then he said, “We have something to say to you,” and

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Patricia stood up. She looked so pretty standing there before those men. Dick began, "Mr. Carter has a proposition to make"; and he told Patricia just what offer it was Mr. Carter had made Ian (he didn't present the advantages as I should have done), and told her it might lead in the future to a partnership if they were mutually satisfied.

"It's a big thing to decide all in a hurry," said Mr. Carter, which was nice and modest of him—I mean to suppose it possible that there could be any but one decision!

Patricia looked from one to the other—first at her father, then at Mr. Carter, then at Ian, and, stepping up to him, she put her arm through his. "Is it for me to say?" she asked.

"Entirely," he answered.

"Then, please," she said, "let me marry the soldier I fell in love with. I want to be poor. It was a poor man I promised to marry; please don't spoil it all."

"Now did you ever hear anything so mad? Yes, there was one thing madder. What did Ian do but throw his arms round Patricia's neck and call her his blessed, baby angel. She had decided

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just as he had hoped she would. Now, grannie, you see what Patricia is—absolutely and perfectly hopeless! After she and Ian had behaved like two lunatics she turned to Mr. Carter and said, “If we get into very great difficulties will you give us another chance when we are older—perhaps when I have been a poor soldier’s wife a long time?”

‘And he said, “Why, yes.” But of course he won’t.

‘Did you ever hear anything so absurd in your life? Of course he is probably offended. Patricia has thrown away the chance of her life, and all probably for nothing more than the romance of a military funeral. I have cried all night and haven’t slept a wink. Lady Pulteney boasts of her daughter’s marriage. It’s nothing to what Patricia’s might have been! There’s no knowing what Ian might have done. Mr. Carter says he has impressed him more than any young man he has met in England.’

What I wrote to Patricia is my secret and hers, and I suppose Ian’s. Not even to my book could I confide it, for fear Claudia should see it. Sl.

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says I am unworldly, and I would not give her good grounds for saying so.

Claudia, of course, was tremendously interested in Patricia's engagement. But it seemed to me she was fretting. Benny wondered if she was becoming a suffragette. 'It creeps in unawares, ma'am, and comes out where you least expect it,' she explained.

Where Benny had least expected it, and where it had apparently crept in unawares, was through the chinks in the mind of Bowles, who it appeared had leanings suffragette way; leanings only! Her mind, I found on examination, to be almost perpendicularly balanced, but leaning just a little, and mostly it seemed on my account and on Miss Claudia's, 'who is such a good manager.' I told Bowles not to worry about us; and I asked her how far she herself was prepared to go. She said she should never forget herself. What exact limit that placed upon her actions I do not know. I read her an extract from a letter I had that morning received from India. It was written by a man whose wife is a strong suffragette. 'Women here,' he wrote, 'are allowed no souls and are classed on the same level as camels; so

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it will be some time before the suffragettes will make any true start in this country.'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Bowles, 'the Indians *do* think a great deal of their camels, don't they?'

It seems to me that Bowles might have a vote. Her mind is surely that of a politician. I am not so sure about old Mrs. Spruce, whom I met in the village one day not long before a General Election. Knowing her to be a staunch Conservative, I felt quite safe in asking her if her husband was going to vote for the Unionist. To my surprise she answered, 'No, ma'am, none of my family have ever been in the Union, and please God none of them ever will be.'

To put things right I said I thought he might be going to vote for Mr. Christian, the Unionist candidate.

'Why, to be sure, ma'am. He visits at your house.'

'He does,' I admitted; 'but you mustn't judge a man by that.'

'Not by the company he keeps, ma'am? Why, when my daughters went into service I had one word for them all, "Look to the company a man keeps and you have the man," and they've

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all done well by me, by themselves and by the men they married. It 's troublous times, ma'am,' she went on (she loves a talk), 'troublous times, wars and tumours of wars—it 's bound to come.' She shook her old head.

'What, war? Do you think so, Mrs. Spruce? I hope not.'

'What 's been before comes again. You remember what they called the French Resolution; Oliver Cumberland was his name.'

I hastily passed from politics to her husband's health. That was even more disturbed. He had a 'tempest' every night. It went to one hundred and three, so the doctor said. 'They *are* troublous times, Mrs. Spruce,' I agreed.

'But you have your grandchildren, ma'am; they 're better than wars.'

I said they were very much better and a great comfort to me in my old age.

Don't Lullington knows more about village politics than any one, just as she knows more than any one about village politicians. She came across, also at election time, Jimmy Furze sweeping leaves in the Bruxton woods. Dear old Jimmy, he is the dearest, quaintest little thing in the

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world and in the way of a man I should say about the smallest.

‘Are you going to vote, Jimmy?’ asked Don’t, placing her foot on his broom, the only known way, up till then, of stopping him sweeping.

‘Yes, miss, sure I be.’

‘Who for, Jimmy?’

‘Whoever the lady says, miss, I’ll do just what she tells me. I don’t know anything about it—but if she says.’

‘But,’ said Don’t, ‘you mustn’t do what her ladyship tells you. You must have a mind of your own.’

‘I never had one, miss; all my life I’ve done what I’m told—sweeping most of the time, miss.’

‘You only sweep in the autumn, Jimmy.’

‘So you’d think, miss—but I be always sweeping.’

‘No time for politics, then?’

‘No time, miss; when it’s not leaves it’s grass, when it’s not grass it’s leaves,’ and Jimmy went on sweeping. It seems to me that Bowles has more time for politics than Jimmy.

When Don’t said good-bye to Jimmy that

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morning, she told him if he called at The Warren he should have a rabbit pie to take home. She was bold enough to suggest that his wife might give him a kiss for it. That brought Jimmy's broom to a standstill, as nothing else had ever done. 'She bain't kissed me these seventeen years,' he said; 'nor bain't I she,' he added, and back to his sweeping.

Whether the vote would soften the heart of Mrs. Jimmy I do not know.

Jimmy can neither read nor write. What he knows he has learned from the most patient of all teachers—Nature. From the birds of the air and the flowers of the field he has learnt the kindliness of his ways, his gentle, unquestioning obedience; from the animals he has tamed, his patience; from the animals he has not tamed, perhaps his cunning. There are reams written in the wrinkles in his face and volumes in the twinkle in his eye.

But it was not about politics Claudia was fretting

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XIX

I HAD still kept from Claudia the secret of the promised picnic.

I felt the time had come when confession is the better part of discretion, for I would rather bear the brunt of a grown-up's displeasure than commit the grievous sin of disappointing a child of a thing which has been 'really and truly' promised. So I told her.

'A picnic for children,' she said, 'of course they will all be ill, and will all catch cold and will possibly most of them be drowned; but, of course, do as you like—only don't blame me.'

So it was gaily arranged. Putts was to come from Winthorpe to do host. From London should come Bounce and Freddy, and children in the neighbourhood should be asked to meet them.

I chose, as good fortune would have it, a perfect summer day, and it proved to be the longest day in the whole year, although it was not the 21st of

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June. The day began very early, much earlier than most of my days, which perhaps was why it seemed so long. With the dawn crept into my room Putts, Bounce and Freddy. It might almost have been called a night attack. They wanted to know, naturally enough, if the picnic time had come? The picnic time had not come; but a night-begowned nurse came and took the children back to bed. But the day was there. The children had brought it and nothing could take it away again. I could not conjure back the night. So I lay awake and thought how absurdly nice the children had looked as they stood beside my bed, Freddy and Putts in ridiculous pyjamas, and Bounce in a night-gown just as ridiculous from the point of view of size. Then their eyes had been so wide open and their cheeks so pink and their lips so dewy. 'New every morning is the child.' How truly the hymn says that . . . but does it say that?

The picnic was to be a tea one. Incidentally every meal throughout the day was a picnic. At breakfast and luncheon there were no earwigs certainly, or insects of any kind; but the feeling of feverish excitement was there.

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'Is it time now?' asked Putts every minute during the morning. And when Putts was tired, Freddy did the asking, and in her turn Bounce, and out of her turn too.

At last, soon after luncheon, the first guest arrived—a little girl, a very demure little girl. Her nurse pushed her into the room, which she naturally resented with a shrug of disarranged muslins, and Putts advanced towards her. 'It's come,' he said, beaming with pleasure and good nature.

'I've come,' said the little girl, smoothing her frock.

'So's it—I mean the picnic,' explained Putts.

'Where is it?' she asked, looking round the room.

'It's going to be outside. This is Grannie Patts,' introducing me.

I said I was glad to see the little girl, and the little girl said her father and mother were quite well, thank you, which made me feel very shy.

'Things *do* come,' said Putts, still bent on putting her at her ease, quite unnecessarily since she was already perfectly at her ease.

'Not always,' she said primly.

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'Picnics do, because they are Grannie Patts' promise,' said Putts valiantly.

'Well parcels don't,' said the little girl.

Putts frowned. What had parcels got to do with it? It wasn't anybody's birthday either. Anyhow his parcels always came.

'There aren't any presents to-day, it's just a picnic,' he explained, getting rather pink.

The little girl kindly said she didn't mean those sort of parcels. She was the only child of a young mother, and I suspected that the parcels that didn't come were probably connected with the clothes of her smart mother. The little girl was very smart too. Putts appraised her with critical eyes. 'Are you going to paddle?'

The little girl shook her head, smiling at his simplicity.

At this moment two little boys arrived, two very keen, very excited little boys.

'Paddle!' said one, 'rather! We've got a change up to here,' pointing to his waist line, 'so we've decided to paddle up to there.'

'Up to where?' said Putts.

'Here,' said the little boy, indicating again his waist line.

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'Let *me* see,' said Bounce, elbowing her way through what had become quite a little crowd.

'That's bathing,' said the demure little girl scornfully. And I think she was possibly right. Could one go higher and still call it paddling? Where does paddling end and bathing begin?

At the mention of bathing Bounce got very pink. 'I don't mix bathe,' she said hurriedly.

She hates bathing and clings to the best excuse she can find, which is that on one occasion her Nannie had said she didn't hold with mixed bathing. Neither did Bounce and she was determined we should know it.

'I don't mix bathe,' she repeated aggressively.

'Is it picnic time?' asked Putts plaintively. 'People *do* talk.'

It was picnic time and the place chosen was a lovely one. It was—as it should be—under the shade of a beech-tree, which tree must stand on a bank above a large meadow, in which the grass must grow knee-deep and, if possible, deeper still must grow buttercups. The bank must be an easy one, so that the smallest child can run up it with ease and roll down it with ecstasy. If the

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smallest child can do neither, the bank loses something of the very reason for which it should exist, and a bank down which no child has ever rolled is, among banks, a poor thing.

I had begged Claudia, in ordering the food, to remember she had once been a child and forget, for the moment, her theories about the feeding of children. My theory is that at picnics they should eat what they like and as much as they can. The results must be anticipated by kind Nannies and wise mothers, and no blame must be attached to grandmothers, for they are known to have no sense.

The children scampered off and I promised to follow more sedately in a few minutes; but I wanted first to see Speedwell. On my way to see him I met some weeds in my path and stooped to argue with them, determined to go to the root of the matter. When I rose again triumphant, I found my hands, and the two fine weeds within them, gathered into the grasp of two thin brown hands and held there for quite a long time, while the man who owned them poured into my astonished ears a long list of all the benefits he had received at my hands. They now gave him

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nothing but two weeds—and earthy weeds at that.

I said if he would kindly tell me who he was it would make it so very much easier. He asked me to forgive him. ‘Of course, how *could* you know?’

I said I didn’t.

‘I am Jordan Rivers, James Rivers.’

My garden seemed to grow Jameses who came with surprising suddenness and demanded astonishing things at my hands.

‘You said I might!’ he pleaded.

‘Of course, my dear boy,’ and I led him to a seat and I sat down, and he sat beside me. I looked at him and discovered him no boy; yet there was that in his smile which showed there still remained something of the boy in his heart, and in his manner a shyness which in a strong man is rather attractive to an old woman—and flattering even. There are some men whose eyes express homage and there are some women who look for this, though they are old and have no right to

‘Jordan Rivers I read a look that
saying, I once had a mother just like
That was all; but I liked it, and for it and

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other things, I liked him. So this was the man to whom I had written unreservedly of the feelings of a grandmother.

I felt the situation keenly, although I realised that with some men I might have felt it still more acutely.

‘Is my hat straight?’ I asked.

‘Perfectly,’ he answered, and I felt better, knowing that if a woman has once consulted a man on matters of dress it implies a certain intimacy and cements a friendship.

I showed him round the garden and all over the house, and never once did I think of the children and their picnic. I pointed out his photograph on Claudia’s mantelpiece. But of Claudia I said nothing.

He stayed on and, I remember now, he sat in the drawing-room looking at the crack at the bottom of the door, watching for the door to open, just as a dog watches. I found him charming, just the one man in the world to whom I could have written such a letter as the one which was posted by mistake. But I could not tell him it was posted by mistake, because he referred to it so often, and never without thanking me profusely.

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It had arrived, it seemed, at an opportune moment, just when he had been feeling particularly depressed, his work apparently fruitless, and the outlook generally black. And yet what had so cheered him? Was he so interested in grandmothers? I could not determine.

Just as he was about to go the door opened and in came Claudia.

'Your hat is on hind-part before, darling,' she said, not looking at Sir James. I turned to him, 'You told me it was all right.'

And he, blushing through his tan, said it had seemed so to him.

I suppose it had. In that part of the world from which he had come perhaps hats were not generally worn.

In the meantime Claudia had seen Sir James but did not recognise him. 'Sir James Rivers, Claudia,' I said.

Now Claudia is nothing if not dignified; but she looked, turned tail, and fled. Fearing she must be ill I went after her. Coming down the stairs as I went up I met Don't, who, flinging her arms round my neck, said, 'He's come, he's come.'

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‘Who?’ I asked.

‘Why, *he*,’ she repeated; ‘dearest darling, you shall never feel lonely or deserted, I promise you!’

‘I want Claudia,’ I said with dignity. There are moments when Don’t overpowers.

‘Does *he*? That is the question!’

‘Dearest child, I have a visitor waiting; I will see you later,’ and I went to fetch Claudia, wondering at her rudeness.

I found her with every hat she possessed strewn about the room. As I went in she said, ‘Will this one do?’ turning a radiant face towards me.

I said I thought it would do excellently.

Then she said she thought I was Don’t.

‘I want you to come down and see Sir James Rivers.’

She went—at a surprising pace. I was going to follow her when I was forcibly prevented by Don’t. ‘Sit down, darling,’ she commanded me, and I sat down, on the stairs of course, in true Lullington fashion. Then I mildly said I didn’t understand in the least. So Don’t enlightened me, and so blinding was the illumination that I felt I should never see any-

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thing again. It seemed that all along I had seen very little.

'Didn't you guess Claudia was in love?' asked Don't incredulous. I shook my head.

'Didn't her not marrying require some explanation?'

Again I shook my head. She had not chosen to marry, that was all. She had been so busy managing me. Don't kissed me.

'Darling,' she said, 'mothers are delicious things; but they don't look deep, deep down. They take for granted they know; and, because a child has ceased to cry for jam, they imagine she never cries. She only doesn't cry for jam because she has ceased to want jam, not because she can't cry.'

I put my hand on the knee of the impertinent child and asked her how she knew so much.

'I don't know how I knew this; but I guessed a little and Claudia wouldn't tell me a little, and Benny tried to hide so much from me that altogether I gained a certain amount of information. Then I have watched Claudia in church and I have seen her really pray. Now most people don't do that. It is only those who want some-

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thing frightfully who really pray. Claudia wanted something frightfully ; and two or three times I have seen her cry.'

That was going too far. 'Don't dear, not cry ! Claudia has never done that !'

Don't nodded.

'And who is the man ?' I asked, bewildered.

'Do you mean to say you don't know ?'

Don't held my hands and looked at me earnestly and long.

'Why, he is in the drawing-room now,' she said tenderly, as though pitying my simplicity.

'But she hasn't seen him for years. . . .'

'I believe,' said Don't sententiously, 'it isn't necessary to see a man to love him.'

I asked Don't to leave me and she left me, and I went to Claudia's bedroom. I opened the door, went in and closed it. I stood as it were in a strange country, where I had thought I knew not only every inch of the ground but every landmark. It seemed as I looked as if the panorama of my child's simple life lay stretched out before me, a life in which I vainly imagined we had trodden every step side by side ; yet how far apart we had wandered ! Hanging on the wall was the

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first hunting crop her father had given her ; the first brush she had brought home. On her mantelshelf were photographs of the boys in every stage of their school existence—in their running things, in their cricketing flannels. There were photographs of nephews and nieces at every age. There was a miniature of me as a girl, a photograph of me as a young married woman, another of me as the mother of my children. There were photographs of her father, of Cynthia, of Bettine, at all ages. There was the photograph of Jordan Rivers. There was nothing to show it was more valued than any other. It might be presumed the housemaid dusted it not more nor less carefully than she dusted all the others. I stood lost in the memories of the past until I was aroused from my dreams by the voice of Claudia calling me. I went downstairs.

At the foot of the stairs a strange Claudia met me and I knew Don't was right. Here was a younger, softer, much less managing daughter. There was a gentle entreaty in her voice and an apology even in her smile. '*We* want to tell you,' she said. And before I knew where I was I found myself kissing Jordan Rivers, who said, '*We*

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owe it to you.' I was growing accustomed to being kissed by young men and was afraid I might begin to look for it.

'To you, darling,' repeated Claudia.

It was very bewildering. In heaven we are told there will be no marriages nor giving in marriage. I shall miss it, no doubt, but it will be a rest.

'The children!' I exclaimed. I had forgotten the picnic.

I would rather meet ten strange son-in-laws-to-be than one disappointed Putts.

It was six o'clock and in the distance I heard the voices of the children, who were returning from the picnic that should have been mine. They streamed in to thank me. I held out my arms to Putts. He dodged under them and ran away. I called him, but there was no answer.

'Thank you very much,' said the demure little girl. And the little boys thanked me *awfully*; but I looked round for Putts.

'Did you enjoy it, children?' I asked.

'*Awfully*, thanks,' they said.

'I didn't bathe,' said Bounce. 'But I paddled!' she shouted.

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‘Don’t be excited, darling,’ said the nurse, laying a restraining hand on a crumpled sun bonnet.

‘Where’s Putts?’ I asked.

‘He’s gone to bed,’ said Freddy.

‘Not so early, darling,’ said the nurse, ‘surely!’

‘Yes, he has,’ said Freddy, twirling round on one leg.

I went upstairs and gently opened the door of Putts’ room. There was nothing to be seen in the bed; but the bedclothes were disordered, and under them was the huddled form of an unhappy child.

‘Putts!’ I said.

No answer.

‘Putts, it’s Grannie Patts.’

Still no answer.

I went to the bed and I put my hand on what I imagined to be the head of the sad little heap. It moved, but only to escape my touch. Then I knew how grievously I had sinned, beyond all hope of forgiveness.

‘Putts,’ I said, ‘if you did something very wrong I should ask you to tell me *why* you had

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done it, and what had made you do it. Won't you ask me ?'

'You *promised*,' came a smothered voice.

'I did, Putts.'

'And . . . that beastly . . . little girl . . . said you . . . wouldn't come . . . and I said you would.'

So that was it. The woman was at the bottom of it. I sat down on the bed. 'Let me see your face, Puttikins,' I pleaded.

From under the clothes there emerged a pink, angry, resentful little face.

I held out my arms and Putts threw himself into them.

'Don't you know, Putts, there is no other little boy in the world I love like my Putts ? Oughtn't he to have known there was some good reason ?'

'But . . . you promised.'

'I know I did, darling, and do you know I am rather a proud Grannie Patts, because if you were so sure I wouldn't break my promise it shows I have never broken it before, doesn't it ?'

'That's why,' he persisted, but smiling.

'Well, shall I tell you why I broke it this time ?'

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'May I tell the beastly little girl?' he stipulated.

'I dare say you may.'

He snuggled up to me and I told him about Claudia and he was tremendously interested. 'Married?' he said, sitting up straight, 'it is rum, isn't it? Did it happen to-day? Did Aunt Claudia ask him to?'

'No—no, darling.'

'The beastly little girl asked *me* to—and I said No.'

I said I thought he had done wisely.

'May I get up?'

I asked him if he wanted to, now that he was comfy in bed.

'*Rather!*' he said; 'it won't take a jiff. Will you show me the man? And will you walk to the picnic place with me?'

I showed him the man and we walked to the picnic place and all was peace and happiness again. I was forgiven, and there is nothing half-hearted about Putts' forgiveness. It is as overwhelming as it is disheveling.

Now to show how demoralising a thing it is to be a grandmother, I confess that I felt even more

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pleasure over that than I did over the happiness of my dear Claudia. Our children, grown up, can do without us. But grandmothers cannot do without the arms of a Putts around them, even though the arms strangle them.

‘Now tell me all about it, Claudia,’ I said, and she told me a little. First of all that Benny knew—had known for twenty years.

I begged Claudia not to be absurd, reminding her that twenty years ago she had been ten years old and in pinafores.

‘Twelve,’ she corrected me, without flinching.

‘Twelve then. What difference does two years make in the absurdity of the ages? You were a child—a baby almost.’

‘I was—a horribly, horribly precocious baby. I loved him because he was so big and so silent, and when he wasn’t silent he talked about elephants, which fascinated me. And he told me the quagga was extinct and I felt so frightfully sorry for the quagga; then for him, then for everybody, and when I felt sorry for any one I instantly loved him. Of course I loved him as a child loves a grown-up who is kind to her. Then when I grew older I began to know how much I loved

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him. When I came out I found still more *how* much, and in what way, I loved him. When other men cared for me, that showed me still more clearly, and I never, never heard anything of him. I lived on what I could gather in the papers. Every mention of him kept me going till the next. Then after years and years, by some miraculous chance he wrote to you—about those votes, and of all letters you chose to answer just that one, never asking me if I would do it for you, as you so often do ! I tried to talk to Cynthia about him, but she had forgotten. In the old days I loved him so much that I was furious with Cynthia for not loving him more.'

'Wait, Claudia ; it was I who told him you had his photograph.'

'Yes, darling, we owe it all to you.'

'There may be some good in the outpouring of a soul then ?'

A hug was all the answer I got.

When Claudia left me a penitent Benny crept into my room. She had come for forgiveness. Could I withhold it ?

'It's been hard to keep silent, ma'am,' she pleaded.

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‘ But why did you ? ’ I asked, trying to be stern.

‘ Because Miss Claudia said it was so hopeless and she didn’t want you troubled.’

‘ But, Benny, she was such a child.’

‘ She loved him as a child loves.’

‘ But she is not a child now.’

‘ No, ma’am ; but with her the love has grown. As she has grown it has grown. She doesn’t know it ; but I have watched her and I know.’

‘ You mean, Benny, that the man she loves is the man of her own making ? ’

‘ Yes, ma’am, I do.’

‘ But will she be happy, Benny ? ’

‘ I think so, ma’am. It seems she’s made a gentleman to suit herself, and no one else could have done it so entirely to Miss Claudia’s satisfaction.’

‘ But only in imagination, Benny.’

‘ I think that’s all that’s necessary with Miss Claudia, ma’am, speaking from my experience ; and he’s a very nice gentleman—you’ve only got to look at him to see that—and he’ll never disappoint her, when he knows what she expects.’

It was all very perplexing. But I believe Benny

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was right. Claudia had created a man after her own pattern.

Don't was deliriously happy and had hopes of being bridesmaid. Claudia vowed herself too old for bridesmaids, and Jordan pleaded for a quiet wedding.

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XX

CYNTHIA wrote that I had neglected her. I had been to Bettine, to Anna even, whereas to her I had not been for ages, and the children were growing up without that intimate knowledge of their grandmother which she looked upon as one of their most valuable social assets. Dear Cynthia, what a big word to describe so small an old woman ! I wrote to say I should certainly not like the children to grow up without knowing the weaknesses of their grandmother, and as their mother was one of the most pronounced of many, I would come on whatever day she chose to suggest. Besides, there was much I wished to consult her about—Claudia's marriage among other things. Should it be from Winthorpe or from Anne's Folly ? I knew which Cynthia would choose, but was glad to give her the opportunity to advise.

As it turned out there was no need for either of us to arrange anything, for one day I got a telegram signed ' Claudia Rivers.' So James had his

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quiet way and Claudia her wedding. But that comes later.

Cynthia lives in the country and withstands it. She prides herself on not vegetating. She is very smart, so smart that it was said of her at one time that she took a fork to her soup. But fashions in the using of forks and spoons change, whereas the seven vulgarities possible in the eating of an egg remain. Cynthia's children commit none of them.

Cynthia's husband enjoys her. He is grateful to her for the ordering of his house, and for her cleverness in keeping herself young and sufficiently beautiful. Her home is a model of what a home should be, supposing the standard to be one of ordered perfection. Her servants wear small black bonnets on Sunday, which in a young—comparatively young—mistress is something of a moral achievement nowadays. Her maidservants, by the way, are quick to marry and marry well. Is there something after all in those bonnets? Do the velvet bows lure where cotton roses fail?

Claudia says that the Kenleigh servants in the kitchen wear brooches with 'Kitchen' on them and the housemaids brooches with 'House' on

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them. But one manager is very apt to laugh at the expense of another.

Of all my children Cynthia perhaps is the only one who has any claim to real beauty, except in the eyes of a mother. She is gloriously healthy and makes a cult of happiness. She says she is the happiest woman in the world and the least troubled—therefore this old mother seems of little use to her. When the babies came, Cynthia could afford to pay nurses to look after them who knew far more about babies than I did, so my advice was not asked. Cynthia's John is rich, healthy and acquiescent. He prides himself on Cynthia's management and not a little on his children. He has some reason to do that, for if they owe their straight noses to their mother, they owe the docility of their tempers to him. And which is it better to live with? The children, too, admire their mother from the bottom of their loyal little hearts, and, as I am the mother of theirs, I find, whenever I visit them, a warm welcome awaiting me. But I must not go to the school-room to get it, I must wait until the children come down, which they do, starched and befrilled, at half-past five.

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I arrived at Kenleigh at half-past five, Benny in attendance with more than my ordinary amount of luggage. Cynthia demands full dress every evening, and the sight of my 'black velvet' pains her. Benny, only too willing to uphold the dignity of the family, upholds Cynthia.

Kenleigh is a large, comfortable house of no particular date, or rather of many. Its outer doors open on to a wide and spacious marble-tiled hall, through which hall one passes perilously to an inner and larger one, used as a sitting-room and furnished as Cynthia's background.

Cynthia was sitting at the tea-table when I was announced (which no grandmother should ever be), and her little girls were grouped around her. They are all fair, all tall, all blue-eyed. Their hair is cut in fringes across their foreheads in a manner that reminds me of Millais' 'Cherry Ripe.' It is a fashion I like because I rarely see it nowadays, and Cynthia wore her hair so when she was a child.

Cynthia's children are delightfully clean. If they were dirtier I think they might be happier. When children are young they should surely have their grubby moments.

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'Grannie,' said Cynthia, 'we never heard you come,' and she and the children closed in upon me. 'Don't tumble your clean frocks, children,' said their mother, and the little girls smoothed their muslins and retired into their pretty shells of shyness.

I said how well they looked, and Cynthia said, 'Of course they are well.' The children beamed. 'And happy,' she added in her bracing manner.

'Boots is going to have a new pony,' said Shoes in explanation.

'No wonder she's happy,' said Spats sighing. 'I wonder what horse power it will be,' she added, being of the motor mind and habit.

'I wouldn't be happy to have a new pony if I had a darling old one,' said Boots sentimentally.

'Old friends are best, Boots,' I agreed.

'My new one will really be best, grannie,' she whispered, 'because it *can* jump, only it doesn't. Hermione is out riding now and hers can't jump one bit—only it *will*.' Perplexing ponies these!

Hermione is the eldest of the four girls and had just passed her seventeenth birthday at the time of my visit.

It is my firm conviction, backed up by Claudia's,

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that Cynthia has a list, in her writing-table drawer under lock and key, of all the eligible young men within motoring distance of Kenleigh. In another drawer, of young men in my neighbourhood. In another, of young men in the neighbourhood of Winthorpe. London, being too vast a field to file, is left to chance. It never occurs to her that Hermione may fall in love with an ineligible young man, nor is it necessary it should, because nobody belonging to Cynthia is supposed to do anything contrary to her wishes, and as a rule they don't. Even the flowers in her garden are tied up and restrained, and violets are coerced into gross feeding so that they may be larger and finer than the violets of other people.

When I had had tea, Boots, Shoes and Spats volunteered to see me to my room.

'May we?' they asked, looking to their mother. She said they might, telling them at the same time that in allowing them to do so she was depriving herself of a very great pleasure and privilege.

'Mother is good,' sighed Spats as we marched upstairs.

'She *does* try hard,' murmured Boots.

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'She doesn't *have* to try,' said Spats loyally, 'it comes—*just* comes.'

'Then it isn't so specially good,' argued Boots.

'It *is*,' said Spats. 'You are trying to take away from our mother's goodness.'

'I don't think so,' said Boots, ignoring the last accusation. 'Is it, grannie?'

'Is it what?' I asked, hedging.

There was a pause.

'*There*, she can't say,' said Spats triumphantly.

Once in my room, they sat themselves down and began to talk.

'We've got a new Fraulein,' they all exclaimed at once.

'Nice?' I asked.

'Wait and see—*don't* say, Boots,' pleaded Spats.

And Spats begged me to wait and not ask Shoes.

'Grannie,' said Spats suddenly, 'is Aunt Claudia really going to be married?'

'Yes, darling, I hope so.'

'Why do you hope so? Mother says she oughtn't to leave you until you . . . I mean . . . didn't she, Boots?'

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‘Yes, she did, and father said you wouldn’t want her to stay, and mother said it mightn’t be——’

‘Listen, darlings. When you hear your father and mother talking together you mustn’t repeat what they say.’

‘Will Aunt Claudia live in India or somewhere?’ asked Spats tactfully.

‘Yes, somewhere, darling. I am not quite sure where.’

‘When I’m married,’ said Boots thoughtfully, ‘I shouldn’t like to live in India for fear God should send me a black baby by mistake. D’you suppose He would, grannie?’

I said I thought not.

‘Is He very careful—very, very careful?’

I said very, very careful.

‘That’s why mother believes in Him then, I expect,’ said Spats; ‘she says she likes people to be thorough. She believes in Harrods too.’

‘But Harrods isn’t the same as God,’ said Shoes, who had been very silent and thoughtful. ‘Every one *has* to believe in God.’

‘Why should they?’ said Boots. ‘Suppose they are heathen, what then? They needn’t.’

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'White people must,' said Shoes, 'because He made them.'

'He made black ones too.'

'Oh no, darling, you mustn't say that,' said Shoes, 'it's *frightfully* irreverent.'

'Didn't He, grannie?'

'It is better not to argue about these things, darlings.'

'But *didn't* He?' persisted Boots.

'Yes, Shoes has forgotten. God made every one.'

'Then,' said Shoes vindictively, 'if He's so frightfully busy He's certain to make a mistake some time or other and He *will* send Boots a black baby, and it will serve her right for saying things against me.'

Here Boots jumped up and confronted Shoes. 'Swallow, Shoes, and say it quickly, the sun is going down in your wrath, look!' She pointed out of the window to the sun, which was irrevocably slipping behind the beech-trees, flushed with the redness of Shoes' wrath.

Obediently Shoes swallowed and began, in a quavering voice, to recite Mrs. Hemans' heart-breaking poem 'Oh call my brother back to me, I cannot play alone.'

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'We have to say that to remind us, when we fight. Nannie makes us. It's to make Shoes think what she would do if I died in the night,' Boots explained complacently, in a most cheerful voice, as if looking forward to a very exciting event for herself and a very uncomfortable experience for Shoes. 'Go on, Shoes, to the end—don't stop.'

Poor Shoes in floods of tears gulped to the end of the cruelly morbid and tragic poem, then she and Boots kissed to make up. 'And you aren't a brother after all, worse luck,' sobbed Shoes.

Spats unmoved had been watching Benny unpack. She stood in awed reverence before my black gown laid out on the bed. 'Isn't it lovely?' she said, touching the trimming with a tentative finger. 'When I grow up *I'm* going to have a dress trimmed with sepoy's.'

Boots, Shoes and Spats are respectively aged nine, seven and five. Their names they got from their father, and not from their godfathers and godmothers in their baptism. Cynthia fought against the names, but in this one instance John prevailed. He says the day he is allowed to have his three spaniels in the house he will call the

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three children Cynthia, Bettine and Clarissa, but not until then.

After the children had gone to bed I went out into the garden. Cynthia promised to join me after she had read the evening paper. I walked along the terrace and down the steps into the rose garden. The glory of the roses was gone. But being Cynthia's garden, I knew how great the glory must have been. It might possibly have fallen short of my idea of perfection, because in roses Cynthia looks for form not fragrance. In looking for a rose now I found a girl. She was hardly more—perhaps a little. The dark eyes that met mine were bright with unshed tears. My heart went out to her as quickly as she tried to slip past me. 'Wait!' I said, 'are you Fraulein?'

She was.

'I am Mrs. Sanford's mother,' I explained.

Her face brightened. 'Ach so, then will the children be so pleased. They so talked of your coming. The first thing in the morning, the last thing at night, they speak of their grandmother.'

I was surprised to hear it. They had always seemed to me dear children, but rather less affectionate than my other grandchildren.

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‘I am looking, Fraulein, for a rose that smells.’

‘That will you not easily find,’ she said, smiling.

‘But I know where there is one. Will you come?’

An invitation so charmingly given was not to be refused. She led the way to the children’s garden and in Boots’ plot I found a tree covered with red roses. Fraulein went down on her knees before it, in which act of worship I would have joined had I been younger.

‘Here,’ she said.

‘Ah!’ I breathed in the scent deeply and gratefully, ‘how delicious.’

‘It is to the children we must come at last for things that are most good,’ said the little Fraulein, smiling.

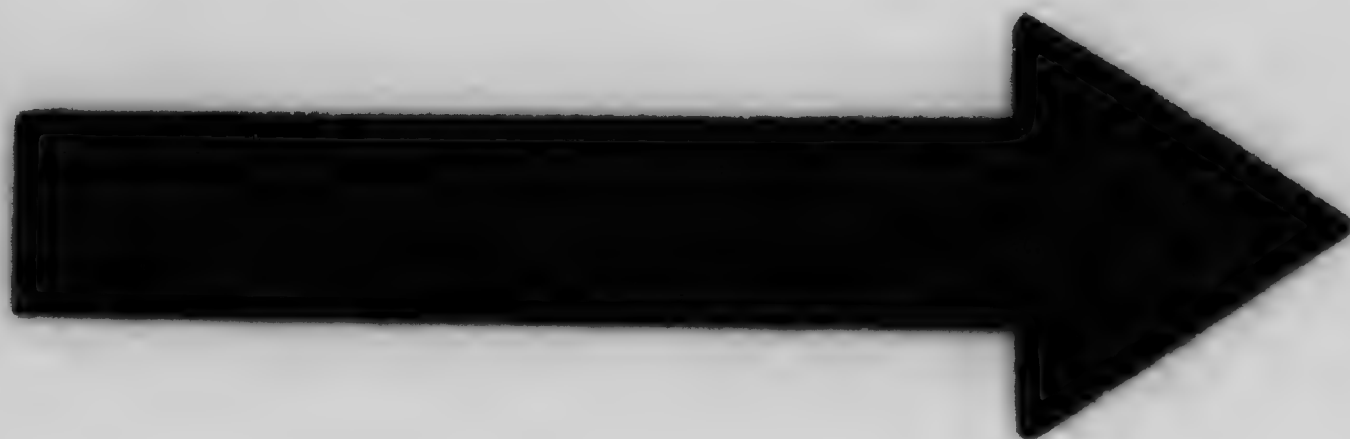
‘You love children?’ I asked.

‘Could I teach where I did not love?’

‘I wish every one who teaches knew that.’

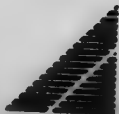
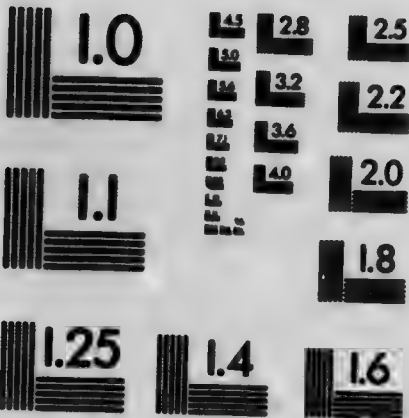
‘They may know it, but they cannot afford to say it,’ she said. ‘It is the thing for which I most thank God that I have been given so great a love for children, or would I be of small use.’

‘They are good children, my grandchildren I mean.’



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She raised her hands in protest. 'That do I not ask, else would I not love them as I do.'

'Too good are they?' I suggested.

'I would see them happier.'

This surprised me, knowing Cynthia's creed to be the pursuit of happiness and her pride the attainment of it for herself and children.

Fraulein asked me if I would come and see the children the next day. I said should I not see them, naturally, and she said she meant in their schoolroom. 'In the woods,' she explained.

'In the woods?' I asked.

'In the woods, yes.'

I promised to see them wherever they might be, and Fraulein picked a red rose and gave it to me. 'For happiness,' she said. I pinned happiness into my lace scarf and I went back to the house wondering what sorrow it was that welled in the eyes of the little Fraulein. Was it Heimweh? I could imagine it. I had something of the same feeling in my own heart. The ordered perfection of Cynthia's house always produced it. I went back to the little Fraulein and asked her if anything troubled her. (I had often felt how lonely it must be for girls away

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from their homes, their countries, their people.) Perhaps she could tell me. 'I have daughters of my own and grandchildren grown up. Our dear, dear Mademoiselle stayed with us for years and became one of us. Can you not look forward to that, or perhaps to a far greater happiness, a home of your own?'

'You would mean marriage?' she asked, and she shook her head. 'That could not be for me.'

'Then I cannot help you?'

'It is possible.'

'Not unless you tell me.'

'It is that I must leave, and I so love the children. I am not satisfied with my work. The three little girls are dogs—three little dogs. They answer to the names of dogs. When their father would call them he whistles! He tells them to take their paws off the table—at meals he says that! and when he helps them to food he says, "Paid for." Till then must they not eat. It is degrading. He has a *passion* for the dogs.'

I breathed again. It was much better than I had expected. I had feared a love complication.

I said I thought their mother's influence would

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counteract their father's; that I found them charming little girls.

'But they listen to what is said, then they go straight and repeat.'

That I knew.

'They have not the big interests in life—the lovely things in life they know not.'

'But if you leave them will they have a better chance?'

That suggested a new train of thought and with it came Cynthia.

She could not have been a more delightful companion than she was that evening. But I noticed she glided over any family news that didn't exactly coincide with her idea of what news in a well-conducted family should be. She preferred to think it imagination on my part that Hugh should be in love with Diana Lullington. 'After all, darling, Diana wouldn't be the least use to Hugh as a wife, would she? Mrs. Lullington must know Hugh is susceptible enough to fall in love with a pretty girl but much too wise to marry her.'

The next day Cynthia broke to me gently that she was taking Hermione to town for the day, could I amuse myself? I assured her I could.

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I had much to see; red roses to smell and Fraulein to know.

It was arranged, by Cynthia, that so soon as she and Hermione had started I should be taken to the woods where the children were doing their lessons. Of course I would not disturb them—this was a stipulation. I went in the pony cart and at the edge of the wood I was met by Fraulein. There were no tears in her eyes, their brightness was now due to excitement. Her cheeks were flushed. She was very young, little more than a child herself, little older than the children she taught.

‘This way, please!’ she said, and she made way for me, brushing the brambles from my path. We came to a clearing in the wood and I heard the sound of laughing voices. There can be no harm in lessons when children laugh. A moment later there emerged from the wood three dirty little boys. They wore what I think are called ‘shorts,’ shirts and no hats. The only thing that proclaimed them girls was their hair, and that was piled on their heads.

‘We are wild Indians, grannie,’ they cried.

They were undoubtedly wild.

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'It's simply glorious, look at our hands.' They held them out. I looked and could not have wished them dirtier.

'Filthy,' I said.

The Indians it seemed must hunt for their living, and in hunting grow exceeding dirty; must cook what they killed, and dig, sow and plant all at the same time. 'You needn't be frightened, grannie,' said Boots, 'it's only pretence; we don't kill anything.'

They did not kill anything; but they did everything children love doing, so long as they are not as a rule allowed to do it.

'Children must be dirty,' pleaded Fraulein, 'else are they no children.'

I nodded.

'They will be as clean as ever when we go home. They so quickly respond to soap and water.'

'They are so fair,' I said.

Fraulein then poured out her heart to me, and it was brimming over with sorrow at the unnaturalness of the children's upbringing. They were taught this and that, and in just one particular way. They must sit so, walk so and

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stand so, all by order. No originality must they have! They had not enough to occupy their minds. They spoke of this marriage, of the other marriage. They played no real games. They played never with a boy, which in itself was bad, because they were beginning—because of his tremendous rareness—to think of him as something fearfully and wonderfully exciting. Fraulein said this with such earnestness that I nearly laughed. The thought of a boy being so rare as to be fearfully exciting was rather delightful. But with Fraulein one must not laugh at moments so serious.

I loved my day in the woods, and I learned as much as the children. I found perhaps fewer varieties of wild flowers; learned a little less of the ways of birds and stalked (the expression was theirs) no insects. Not that I was above stalking insects, except in the sense that they were so far below me that I could not see them. The children acted a play; I was audience. When they read I listened. What they cooked I swallowed. I cannot say I loved that; but I did not flinch from my duty as a grandmother.

I asked Fraulein why things so innocent should

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be kept from the children's mother. I thought she would love to see them playing in the wood.

'Legs bare?' asked Fraulein with her eyes wide open, 'the trousers—shorts? Ten thousand times no. But it is no sin what we do?'

Assuredly it was no sin.

'Now children, for things of beauty,' said Fraulein, 'go!' and the children ran away, and in a few minutes there sprang into the clearing three woodland nymphs in brown rags—glad rags if ever rags were glad! On their heads were wreaths of flowers, in their feet the spirit of dancing itself. Fraulein sat on the stump of a tree and played on a whistle-pipe. If she had taught the children nothing else she had taught them to be beautiful. I pinched myself and said, 'I am old Mrs. Legraye. These are the very conventional little girls of my extremely conventional but dearly loved daughter, Mrs. Sanford. John is a dear, but a magistrate for all that. Bravo, children, dance away!' and heavens, how they danced!

They ran, too, to the sound of music, through the bracken, into the wood and out again. They raised slim little arms in supplication to Heaven, and when Heaven showered gifts upon them,

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little pagans that they were, they pelted each other with the gifts of the gods—pretence again, but very delightful.

All too soon came six o'clock. On a bench sat three little girls, with their golden hair neatly tied up in ribbons, respectively pink, white and blue. Their faces were washed. Their hands were clean. The glad rags were laid away, and later home walked three demure little girls, driven by a Fraulein still more demure. In the shadow of the trees something moved. I stopped to see what it was. It winked at me.

'Splendid, isn't it?' said John, stepping out. 'What wouldn't the Palace give to get that?'

There spoke the proud father, and he believed what he said—so did I.

'You knew, John? You have seen it before?'

'Whenever the gods ordain that Cynthia should go to London. During the summer, I have told her, I think it only right I should increase her dress allowance.'

My son-in-law and I walked home together. Why had Fraulein not waited for me? Why should she suppose I should care to walk home by myself?

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I longed for my next day in the woods with the children, but Cynthia stayed at home and claimed my companionship.

I asked her if she was pleased with Fraulein and she said she was entirely pleased. She found her sufficiently old-fashioned without being exactly prudish. 'She understands that the children are to be essentially womanly. I know I am attempting almost the impossible in trying to make them girls of twenty years ago, but the vogue for the girls of the present day will pass. The first rich young man who revolts will look for a different girl and he shall find three here !'

'He should not require three,' I ventured.

Cynthia smiled and said, so soon as one rich young man revolted others would quickly follow. 'With Hermione,' she said, 'I know I am too late. She must be as other girls are, because the young man of the present day is satisfied she should be. But in the cases of the others I am going to forestall fashion. They are to be brought up to meet a demand that will exist by the time they are ready to supply it.'

I told Cynthia that what amazed me was that she should be my child.

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'Yes, darling, it is curious I suppose. You left us to go our own happy way. And it was entirely owing to my own management and good sense that I married John. You made no effort to ascertain the state of his affairs. He might have been poor for all you appeared to care. Neither did you prevent Bettine from marrying Derek, which as a mother you should have done—charming and delightful as he undoubtedly is. But this much you certainly did for us. You set at rest the doubts in the minds of men as to what we might possibly become when we grew old. They looked at you and took heart. Of course Bettine is happy, even ridiculously happy, but the Derek wouldn't have died if Derek could have had the best advice.'

'Don't, Cynthia,' I protested, putting my hand on hers.

'Well, darling, it's got to be faced. It's a fact.'

'But it was no question of money. It was all so sudden.'

'They thought so, I know, and it comforts them to think so. But a rich man sends for a doctor at the tiniest suspicion of a pain in a child's

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finger whereas the poor man waits, because he knows it will probably be nothing. And nine times out of ten it is nothing. Bettine, of course, doesn't think anything could have been done because she knows there is nothing on earth that she wouldn't have done, no sacrifice she wouldn't have made, and hers is not the nature that looks back, that thinks things might have been different, if something else had been done! She has your trusting nature, and therefore when she is your age she will be just as adorable as you are.'

'Poor darling Bettine,' I said.

'Yes, she is a darling, and she has borne her sorrow as none of us could have borne it; but there she is—without her child!'

'My faith is not yours, Cynthia,' I said.

'Well, you must own it's a more practical faith. But we won't talk about it—Dick married Anna.'

'... is he happy?'

'Is he not? He has Patricia whom he adores. If ever Patricia is ill there is nothing he won't be able to do for her.'

'And yet she is going to marry a poor man.'

'I can't imagine how Anna can allow that! A

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woman who so inexorably changes her figure with every fashion should be able to keep so small a thing as a daughter within bounds.

'Now there's Hugh, you tell me quite calmly that he is going to marry Diana. How can it possibly be for his ultimate happiness? He will never have more than enough to live comfortably as a bachelor. He marries—can you help him? You will send him a hamper of vegetables twice a week—to begin with. Then when he forgets to return the hampers Speedwell will say there is nothing worth sending. And what isn't worth sending will cost Diana fifteen shillings a week in London! They will live in Chelsea or Kensington. Diana will live prettily and, in a picturesque way, untidily. She will imagine she can dress in embroidered collars—old muslin collars—and beads, and for a time she will. Her house will be charming and some good cook will leave an excellent place for a good home, which Hugh will boast of to his friends, and they will want to see if he really knows what a good cook is. That will mean dinners, which they will not be able to afford. Then the baby will come. Diana will talk of it for months as

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"Peter," and she will make his underclothes, using the piano as a thimble, and Hugh will cry over the deliciousness of it all. When Peter comes and proves a girl, they will laugh and say it doesn't matter a bit, the next one can be Peter! Until which time they can call the girl Peter, because they have grown accustomed to the name. Hugh will know nothing (until experience teaches him) of sleepless nights, of convulsions, of ignorant nurses. He has no conception of what badly blacked boots mean. As the baby grows older and the indifferent nurse matters less, or Diana has perhaps learned something, he will begin to breathe again. Then another baby will come. Two babies in a small London house! Two perambulators in a small hall! Then in course of time, schooling——'

'Cynthia, don't!'

'Yes, darling, I must! Diana in the meantime will have grown fat.'

'My dear child,' I said with some warmth, 'it's quite absurd. I should like you to see some of Bettine's friends who live in Chelsea.'

'Wait, darling; how old are they? Quite young?' And very pretty, very picturesque?

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But where are the pretty, picturesque Chelseaites of twenty years ago? In West Kensington? It depends on the number of the children. There—I've done.'

I was glad she had. I did not dare take my poor darling Cynthia into my arms and cry over her and tell her what I knew, and that was that she had missed almost everything in life worth having.

Had she ever seen in John's eyes such a look as Derek gives Bettine a dozen times a day? And if the name of Derek and Bettine's child is graven on a cross of stone, is it not also written on their hearts, drawing them closer and closer as the years go by?

Cynthia made me furious, though of course I love her dearly.

'You are a very unworldly woman, darling,' she said, 'and a much richer one than you deserve—not now, of course! But you are a darling and I would not like my children to have any other kind of grandmother—you understand?'

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XXI

WHILE I was at Kenleigh, Hermione asked me if I thought it mattered *enormously* people being poor.

I said it depended enormously on the people.

The child then sighed and asked me if I had happened to notice Mr. Gomling in church.

‘Mr. Gomling?’ I said, really to mark time. I had noticed him.

‘I think you must have, he’s the curate.’

‘Yes, yes, I noticed the curate.’

I was bound to admit it, for he had read the Litany as I had never in my long life heard it read. Its petitions—both temporal and spiritual—took on new meaning, all embracing in their supplication, perfect in their simplicity. I was amazed and ashamed to find a thing I had often found dull so splendid a revelation. It convinced me more than ever that we should not sing our prayers—if we would really pray.

‘Yes, I noticed the curate,’ I admitted.

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‘Well, grannie, I want you to be kind to him. Will you?’

‘Why, darling?’

‘Because he’s the only thing I care for in the world — except you — and geography. Darling grannie!’ Her hand stole into mine.

Cynthia’s troubles were before her, and I thought with some malice of two perambulators in a very small hall. John could well afford to help to support their inmates.

‘You won’t tell, grannie,’ whispered Hermione.

‘No, darling, I certainly won’t.’ After all, what was there to tell? Hermione at nineteen might think very differently to Hermione at seventeen, and Mr. Gomling must know it.

I looked at this my grandchild with fresh and interested eyes, and it dawned upon me that there was something of the curate’s wife about her. She took after the Sanfords rather than the Legrayes, and there was a goodness and a demureness in her manner that promised much happiness to some Mr. Gomling in the future and much soup to some old women.

I asked her if she played the harmonium and she said Yes, blushing as she made shy confession.

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'You wouldn't do anything without the knowledge of your mother?' I suggested.

'Do anything, grannie?' she asked, widening her innocent eyes. 'Oh no, except the harmonium. She doesn't know I do that. She thinks them very vulgar things. Of course I wouldn't *do* anything.'

'Mr. Gomling doesn't know?'

'There isn't anything to know. I only pray for him and he prays for me—every day in church, although he doesn't know it.'

'How?' I said, thinking of widows, Turks, infidels, within none of which categories could Hermione as yet come.

'For all that are desolate and oppressed,' she said softly.

Poor Hermione! how young, how dear, how funny and how serious children can be.

She then asked if she might tell me something so that I might tell her if it was wrong. I shuddered. How reluctantly would I convict this demure child of sin!

'It's this, grannie—it's a little complicated. I take the last letters of the words down the side of the prayer-book, and if I can spell *his* name out

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of those letters without using one twice, then I take it as a sign that it will come all right. Do you think that is wrong ?'

'Not in the least, darling, only I shouldn't build my hopes on such a thing.'

She had yet another secret. She had written a novel. Would I read it and faithfully tell her what I thought of it ? I promised to read it. Was it a love story ?

'Of course,' she said, then added, 'sort of.'

I took Hermione's novel to my room and, sitting up in bed that night, I read it. It was not easy to read because it rolled up with a bang every now and then ; but I was able to gather that her heroine was very poor, very beautiful and loved very dearly a young man also very poor—not beautiful but with a very honest face—the kind of face that did every one good who saw it. Hermione laid great stress on the fact that honesty, though a most commendable thing in itself, does not quickly lead to great riches. There was also a very rich young man who loved the heroine to distraction. He always turned very pale, by the way, when he saw her, and when she saw him she turned very red. So far there was

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nothing very unlike other novels written by other grandchildren. It was not even a great surprise to me when the heroine, for reasons clearly explained, married the rich young man. The reasons were that by so doing she would be able to enrich her parents in their extreme old age, educate her numerous brothers and sisters (some of whom were still babies), and influence the future fortunes of the poor but honest young man.

However, just before the wedding of the rich young man with the heroine the poor young man met his death in rescuing, from a burning house, the child of an Italian organ-grinder. (The organ was saved.)

Before her marriage the heroine sent for the rich young man and told him she could never love him because she still loved the poor young man who was dead. Buried with him was her love and her life. The rich young man bit his lip and bowed.

Hermione drew a veil over the marriage service, it was too tragic a thing to write about. At the church door, she told us, the couple virtuously—or virtually—parted. (Hermione had written and re-written both words.)

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Later, we find the young people established in their magnificent town house, with its marble staircase and other glories, and we are not surprised to find the bride the most beautiful woman in London. But, like the staircase, she seemed to be made of marble. She was so cold, but in her eyes was a haunting sadness. (She showed this amount of feeling that whenever she heard an organ playing in the street she fainted.)

She never saw her patient husband and it was altogether very tragic.

Then Hermione sought to comfort her readers by saying that the husband had this consolation—that as the years went by he occasionally passed his beautiful wife and lovely children on the marble staircase.

I took off my spectacles here, rubbed them and put them on again. Yes, 'his lovely children.' 'And there was a look in his eyes of pathetic resignation which would have softened the heart of a harder woman than Hyacinth Lestrangle.'

Cynthia's methods had answered better than she knew. Hermione was undoubtedly a girl of twenty years ago. Where was the young man who could appreciate her?

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‘Did you read my story, grannie?’ she asked very early next morning.

‘Yes, darling, I read it.’

‘Did you like it?’—this very shyly. The child has dear, calm, truthful eyes and she stood at the end of my bed looking very clean in a pink cotton frock.

I said I liked the story very much.

‘I am afraid it is not very original.’

‘Well, darling, the marble staircase perhaps . . . but otherwise I think its originality is its most striking point.’

She asked if I thought she might send it to a publisher?

I suggested she should leave that to me. ‘You see, darling, I think it must be sent to a particular kind of a publisher—to one who will understand. . . . I should not like it to go anywhere. I am afraid it is too long for a short story and too short for a long one.’

With that Hermione was content, and the novel lies in my writing-table drawer and will amuse her some day I dare say.

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XXII

'I THOUGHT of you in my sleep last night, grannie,' said Shoes as she sat down beside me. 'May I stay with you?' She had a duster to hem, poor child.

I begged her to stay, and she settled herself down and smiled.

'Do you want the others?' she asked, putting her needle into the hem and pulling the thread straight through. 'Oh—bother!' she exclaimed.

'No, Shoes, I want you.'

'I said you did,' she said complacently, knotting the cotton and holding up the discoloured little knot for my inspection.

'I always want my grandchildren, but you most of all, just at present. So you dreamed of your grannie, did you?'

'No, I never dream, I just think.' She spread the duster on my knee.

'But you were asleep.'

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‘Yes, I was,’ she agreed, pricking me gently through the duster with her needle.

‘Don’t, darling.’

‘Sorry, grannie. Was it you?’

‘Then it was dreaming—people call it that,’ I said, returning to the subject of dreams.

‘Well, *I* don’t. I call it thinking in my sleep. I often do.’

‘What do you think about in your sleep?’

‘I run away.’

I asked her why she should think in her sleep of running away.

She said because it was a nice thought, and she took up her duster again.

‘You would like to run away, Shoes?’

She nodded.

‘But aren’t you happy?’

‘Not so very,’ she said sadly, eyeing the duster and its wavy hem.

‘But, darling, you have such a happy home! You ride every morning—and you drive every afternoon.’

Shoes laid her hand on mine. ‘Yes, grannie, but *think* of driving every afternoon behind an umbrella.’

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'Then the games in the woods,' I suggested.

'Hush,' said Shoes, putting a finger to my lips, 'that's a frightfully secret thing,' and she began dusting her little boots—'a frightfully secret thing,' she repeated.

So secret a thing was it that when Cynthia discovered it there was a terrible to-do, which ended in the dismissal of the little Fraulein. For her I pleaded not less eloquently than did the children, though with less vehemence perhaps. The three little girls rent the air with their lamentations, and a harder heart than Cynthia's, I should have thought, would have yielded to their entreaties. But three pink little faces with swollen noses, and eyes invisible, failed to soften her heart and Fraulein went. It was not that Cynthia minded the dancing—but she did mind the deceit! That John knew made it rather worse than better. And a cloud dark as night gathered over Kenleigh, and three little girls—sad and sullen little girls—refused to be comforted.

By stealth I stole up at night and soothed them one by one to sleep. The after-sob, or backwash, of a child's crying? a most terribly upheaving

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of all emotions, and the three little beds shook under its force.

Then rose triumphant the social Cynthia. A few days after Fraulein had gone and the children were supposed to have forgotten all about it, Cynthia took her pen in hand and sent invitations to the county bidding them to an alfresco entertainment, and in the corner of the cards she wrote, 'Dancing by children.'

To so novel an entertainment the neighbours flocked. It was so clever of Mrs. Sanford to think of anything so delightful.

The neighbours in foulard, in muslin, in silk and satin and in every shape and form of best hat, big hat and small, sat and waited—in a damp wood as luck would have it—and Cynthia waited and we all waited. But no children came, so no children danced.

When diligently searched for they were found. But they were in no fit state to dance for they had no hair to speak of, and no eyelashes or eyebrows worth thinking about. At least Boots and Shoes had none. Spats, it transpired later, had lacked the courage at the last moment.

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'So we can't dance,' said Boots blinking, 'if we wanted to.'

'No more we could,' spluttered Shoes, 'without Fraulein.'

And they couldn't. Not that children couldn't dance without a Fraulein, or for the matter of that without hair, eyelashes or eyebrows; but Cynthia's children couldn't because, with her sense of the fitness of things, she would never allow it.

So the neighbours had tea and coffee and ices and green figs and peaches and went their way, and Cynthia was left with a problem to solve.

It was very naughty of the children, of course, I agreed. But grown-ups must remember in dealing with those Frauleins or Mademoiselles or Nannies whom children love that if punishment must be meted out it must be weighed with the measures of justice.

Cynthia pleaded an excuse; she said she had other reasons for sending Fraulein away. There was the curate—evidently greatly attracted. And Cynthia could not have ideas of that kind put into Hermione's little head.

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‘ And what is to happen to the little Fraulein ? ’
I asked.

‘ Isla wanted a governess for Putts, so I sent her there.’

Most happy Fraulein, most blest Putts ! I thought, but I did not say so.

Boots and Shoes looked very ugly shorn of hair and eyebrows, but poor Spats was in a worse way—she was a sneak, and that is harder to bear.

‘ It ’s worse to be a sneak than to have no hair,’ quoth Boots grandly.

‘ And it ’s true, grannie,’ sobbed Spats, ‘ but I couldn’t do it. I know it ’s wrong . . . I know it ’s . . . awful . . . and I know I oughtn’t to say it . . . but I *do* love my hair.’

I felt for poor Spats. She wasn’t the stuff of which martyrs are made. The other children might have forgiven her most things, but as they cheered up a little she laughed at them, and that they could not forgive, and I don’t wonder.

Benny rescued the golden hair and made of it the stuffing for a pillow. That helped the shorn lambs more than anything—the pillow was so soft. Then the naughtiness of the children was

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forgotten in the face of a tragedy that came stealthily in the night—as tragedies do come—giving no warning of its coming.

One night I had been asleep some time—and awake a long time—when I heard my bedroom door open very gently. ‘Who’s there?’ I asked.

‘It’s me, darling—Cynthia,’ and she turned on the light.

She was in a dressing-gown with her hair in two long plaits.

‘How young you look, my child,’ I said.

‘I didn’t want you to be disturbed: there are people running about and I thought you might hear them, so I came to tell you it’s nothing. Spats isn’t very well and we’ve sent for the doctor. One can’t be too careful.’

She sat down on my bed. ‘There is no need to be anxious,’ she assured me, and as she spoke in her calm, level voice she pleated the lace frills on her dressing-gown, and I watched her fingers as she did it, and remembered that when they were tiny fingers they had been particularly difficult to coax into little gloves.

‘There is no cause for anxiety?’ I asked.

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'Oh, none whatever . . . she has probably eaten something that has disagreed with her. I wish I hadn't said that about Bettine—it seemed a little unkind.'

'My darling child, Bettine did all that was possible.'

'Yes, I know ; but just too late.'

'Even that is not certain,' I said.

'Well, darling, if you hear noises you 'll know. Good night—or good morning, isn't it ?' She walked to the window and looked under the blind. 'Yes, it 's quite light. It 's the darkness that makes one feel nervous—too absurd.'

For hours longer, it seemed, I lay awake, listening. I heard the opening and shutting of doors, then the reassuring taps of the housemaids' brushes on the staircase—one very comforting tap against my door. It must be all right or the housemaids wouldn't be about their business—then it struck me that in Cynthia's well-ordered house even death would not deter them from their sweeping. What absurd things one thinks of !

Then outside my door I heard the whispering of men's voices, John's and another's. Spats was

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probably quite well again. But in spite of the certainty that she must be so I sat up in bed and listened—and listened—and listened. If it had been Bettine's child who was ill I should never have stayed in bed ; but Cynthia would not want me. She would beg me not to fuss. She was so calm, so collected, so certain.

At last Benny came. 'Benny?' I said.

'Yes, ma'am.'

'The child?'

'Mrs. Sanford seems quite happy, ma'am.'

'And nurse, what does she say?'

'Nothing, ma'am.'

'*She* is not quite happy?'

Benny shook her head.

'Could you find Miss Cynthia and ask her to come to me if she can—I don't want to worry her. . . .'

Cynthia came ; she was still in her dressing-gown. 'Don't worry, mother. I haven't had time to dress. There are so many arrangements to make. John is telephoning now. He . . . Dr. Smart would like another opinion. Of course it's not necessary. It's just a precaution, that's what I meant about Bettine. There's no one

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like Sir Peter Mason. He should be here in two hours.'

'Supposing he can come,' I ventured.

'John will make it worth his while, of course,' said Cynthia confidently. 'Don't worry, darling,' she added.

I dressed. Benny was as silent as I wished to be. There was nothing to be said, nothing to be done that was not being done. Money was power. I had never before been so acutely conscious of the luxury of my bedroom. The lace on the dressing-table cover was real. I fingered it, and the feel of it seemed to comfort me. Cynthia could spend what she chose. Nurses had been sent for—doctors sent for.

As Benny brushed my hair I could see her face in the glass; her lips were moving. That gave me even greater comfort than the thought of John's money. There was a quiet strength of determination in her face.

'It's a lovely day, Benny,' I said, longing for the reassurance of her voice.

'It's a lovely day, ma'am,' she answered.

'The sun is very hot.'

'The wind tempts the sun, ma'am.'

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My hair done, I walked to the window and looked out at the bright sunshine. I turned back into the room, glad to be away from the light. The day was too lovely, too like Spats. The sunshine reminded me of her hair, the blue sky of her eyes.

The door opened and Cynthia came in. She was dressed. She was not so calm as she had been. She spoke impatiently.

'Sir Peter Mason is away, mother—out of town. We have telephoned to several doctors—they are all away. It's too bad—people are just as likely to be ill in August as at any other time.'

'Telephone to a hospital,' I suggested.

'I must have some one I know something about. . . . I must have the best. . . . John will pay *anything*. . . . I'm not worrying of course; but Dr. Smart looks anxious and John is too childish for words. . . . If it's a question of an operation it is urgent . . . it always is.'

'Dr. Smart couldn't do it?'

'No, he hasn't the nerve. . . . He's too old and too fond of the child—besides, he's an old idiot.'

There was a knock at the door. Cynthia went

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to it. She came back. 'There's something wrong with the telephone.'

'Ma'am,' said Benny, 'I know.'

'Do be quiet, Benny,' said Cynthia; 'you can't possibly know anything about it. Mother, come down and amuse John—do.'

Benny had left the room. 'She can't be ridiculous enough to be offended,' said Cynthia.

I knew Benny was far too understanding to be that. She did not come back for an hour; but when she came she brought with her a surgeon, and everything that was necessary was done and the life of Spats was saved. And Benny did it—not money!

'How did you do it, Benny?' I asked. 'How did you know where to find him?'

She told me she had heard the coming of the great surgeon discussed in the housekeeper's room. He had retired—having made, so it was said, a large fortune. She knew where the house was and it took her exactly quarter of an hour to get there. Mrs. Sanford hadn't called, so the chauffeur had never actually been there.

'Go on, Benny dear.'

'Well, ma'am, I took upon myself to order the

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car, and I got to the house and I found the surgeon with a little girl on his knee—he was telling her a story. I took that for a good omen. As I drove along I prayed that he might love children. I pointed to the child on his knee and I said, "There's a little child lying in great danger a few miles from this." He asked, What child? and why other doctors weren't sent for? I told him that it was holiday time, and doctors, like other people, were taking their holidays—also that the telephone had gone wrong. Then, ma'am, I told him it was *his* father who had years ago come to us in our distress . . . when our child. . . .'

'How did you know that, Benny?'

'Because it was the same name, ma'am, and the doctor's face was the same face—just as good, just as kind. At the mention of his father's name he slid the child off his knee and he said, "Yes, yes, he married the Princess." And the little girl said, "Did they have any children?"—so like a child, ma'am—and the doctor said, "Hundreds"; then turning to me he asked, "Did he save the child?" (meaning did his father save our child) and I shook my head. "My dear, good old father

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must have felt that. We must save this one, eh ? ” he said, and he told *me* to hurry up . . . as if it was *me* who was dawdling.’

I nodded. My heart was too full for words. Benny went on.

‘ In a few minutes—which seemed hours—the doctor was ready. He brought with him all that was necessary. He asked, as we came along, if it was *my* grandchild ? Just for something to say, I should think. “ *My* grandchild ? ” I said, “ I should like you to *see* her grandmother.” ’

‘ Dear Benny, you mustn’t be so impulsively loyal,’ I said, laying my hand on hers, which trembled beneath mine.

‘ I couldn’t help it, ma’am, and perhaps I wasn’t quite myself. It wasn’t money that did it.’

‘ No, it was the mercy of God and you—you wonderful Benny ! ’

‘ No, ma’am, I didn’t mean that. If I was anything, I was allowed to be His humble instrument. It was the name of his father—the doctor’s father I mean. You should have seen him jump when I said it.’

It was all over—the acute anxiety, and the

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danger. The doctor said the child would do well now so long as no complications set in—and it was unlikely they should, Dr. Smart said, knowing Spats.

In the evening I stole into the library to see what John was doing. He was asleep. At his feet sat the two little girls, sobered with terror, watching him as he slept. On his lap lay his black spaniel, also asleep. I put my finger to my lips and the little girls nodded. I looked at their father; they pointed to the dog and smiled—wan little smiles, and they blinked their lashless eyes, poor little things. They were so ugly, but so dear.

As I left the room I met Cynthia in the passage. 'Where's John?' she said.

I pointed to the door I had just closed.

'And the children?'

'The children are there, Boots and Shoes, and the spaniel Spats is on John's knee asleep.'

It was only then Cynthia broke down.

It is often said by the young that the old do not feel sorrow keenly. It is perhaps that the old sorrow with hope. In separation they have this

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comfort—that the time of waiting cannot be long, and it makes all the difference.

But old as I am, I found a sick child shattering enough to my old heart, and when with my own eyes I had seen hers closed in a beautiful sleep and the flush of health returning to her cheeks, I craved leave to go home and rest. Cynthia tenderly gave it to me, although I doubt that she was ever less willing to part from her old mother. And Benny and I went home, and as I looked at her I saw what she had been through, and as she looked away from me she said, 'It's old Speedwell and his garden you want, ma'am!' And it was.

'A-penny-inside-us was it, ma'am,' said old Speedwell as he stood with his foot on his spade ready to dig so soon as I had done hawering, 'well, it's a queer disease and our fathers and mothers died without it fast enough . . . but a little child . . . that's bad, we can't spare them as we get on.' And Speedwell to his digging.

Claudia was distressed that I did not write my book directly I got home. She showed a sudden and great interest in it. She even went to the length of reading some of it. She owned to

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skimming it, and when she had skimmed it she closed it and looked at me curiously.

‘So that is what life is to you, is it?’

I said it was something of what life was to me.

‘To mention village things only . . . you say nothing about the churchwarden business?’

Now the ‘churchwarden business,’ as Claudia chose to call it, had resulted in the resignation of the Vicar, the estrangement of most good friends in the village, and had stood out as something of importance in our lives.

‘I imagine Putts must have been here,’ I pleaded.

Idly Claudia turned the manuscript pages. ‘The Morocco question? I see nothing about that,’ she appraised me with her calm, critical eyes.

‘Wait . . . I think Bounce had measles just at that time.’

‘Then the . . . Far East question?’

‘Patricia’s engagement came nearer,’ I said, unashamed.

‘The Home Rule Bill?’

‘My Home Ruler got engaged,’ I gasped, and

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Claudia flung the book to the winds and her arms round my neck.

‘You absurd—most absurd of all grandmothers,’ she cried, which shows she doesn’t in the least understand them. I am very much as other grandmothers.

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XXIII

PATRICIA is married.

On a cold winter's afternoon I stepped from the train on to the little platform at Winthorpe station. Even the fresh ping in the air seemed a caress. And the bare branches of trees swaying in the breeze seemed arms waving a welcome to me—an old friend.

The memory of the many times I had come home just like this, when Winthorpe was still mine, came back to me with a rush. If there is great sorrow in leaving a home one loves, there is great joy in coming back and finding a son happy in it. This joy I felt as I stepped into the brougham that was waiting for me. Another joy was to feel a little hand steal into mine out of the darkness—not a dream hand, as so many hands are at my age, but a very real hand and just sticky enough to proclaim itself the hand of Putts.

'Is Mrs. Scroggins at home?' he asked, settling down to business.

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‘No,’ I said, as it was my bounden duty to say.

‘Mr. Scroggins?’

‘No, but—wait till I get my glove off.’

I suppose every grandmother worthy of the name plays ‘Mrs. Scroggins.’ If not, then must she begin and instantly of her finger and thumb make a circle, into which her grandson will pop his finger and say, ‘Is Mrs. Scroggins at home?’ The grandmother must say No to all and every inquiry respecting any member of the family, it being necessary to the good playing of the game that the Scroggins family should always be out, because when the grandson chooses he will say ‘Good morning,’ and will withdraw his finger, and it is the grandmother’s duty to catch it. That she will not be able to do so I can tell her at once and save her the mortification of disappointment. Also she must be prepared for a kind of paralysis that will seize her when her grandson says ‘Good morning.’ But let her take courage in the certain knowledge that the affection will pass, leaving her quite well and strong and able to play the game for many a day to come—provided she has grandchildren young enough to enjoy it.

I played Mrs. Scroggins for a mile or two of

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our drive, and not having once caught Putts, he asked me if I would like to put on my glove . . . I might if I liked . . . and had I expected him to come and meet me ?

I said such a thing had entered my head.

‘ You mean you thought I would ? ’

I said I had thought it possible.

‘ Well, it was a pretty near shave. ’

‘ How ? ’

‘ Well . . . you see I was to—if I was good. ’

‘ And you very nearly weren’t ? ’

‘ I should just think I wasn’t ! ’

‘ What made you good ? ’

‘ Well, Patsy looked at me . . . you know ! She ’s going to be married from our house. ’

‘ Yes, I know. ’

‘ Of course, that ’s why you ’ve come, isn’t it ? ’
Then he added, ‘ Heaps of people are coming. ’

Patricia was married all on a winter’s day. I saw her standing by the side of her young husband. I heard the gentle voice of old Mr. Goodheart proclaim them man and wife in the sight of God, and I saw them pass down the aisle, through the porch, out into the little churchyard. I caught

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the look Patricia gave Ian as she paused there for one second, and I knew it was of her Grannie-Man she was thinking, and I blessed her for the thought that was uppermost in my mind. How he would have loved to see her happiness.

I stood on the doorstep at Winthorpe and watched Patricia, a bride, drive away from the home to which, as a bride, I had come.

Far into the night I sat and watched the young people dancing in the big hall. I saw beautiful girls and splendid young men. (Cynthia says I think all girls beautiful and all young men splendid—and she is right. Youth to me is both splendid and beautiful—and most wonderfully kind.) Many of the boys and girls stopped to speak to me, and one girl, prettier than the rest, entertained me charmingly for quite five minutes. Then she whispered to a young man who was passing, 'Please come and talk to this dear old lady, I've been *so* good,' and I, knowing that she wanted the young man to dance with her and not to talk to me, said, 'You *have* been good, now dance with him. I am most grateful to you,' as indeed I was.

'I loved it,' she said blushing, and I knew she

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had, because she had told me, in those few minutes, that she was in love, and no girl finds time so spent dull. But she was just showing off to the young man and she knew I knew it. As she danced away she whispered, 'You angel,' and I was pleased . . . but quite suddenly I felt rather lonely and certainly older than usual and a little sadder, which was selfish of me when every one was so happy. I went upstairs and instinctively found my hand on the schoolroom door.

I opened the door expecting to find the room empty. It was not.

Reaching in front of the faintly flickering fire I saw the figure of a boy. Dozens of times in years gone by I had so found my boys, nursing in solitude their sorrows—the death perhaps of a favourite dog, of all sorrows the hardest to bear, an examination not passed, a love affair even. On the boy's head I now laid my hand, as I had done many times before. But the face that looked up was not a boy's face, but Dick's, worn with unhappiness, drawn with misery.

'Richard, my son, is this right?' I asked, and for answer he took my hand and held it against his cheek.

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‘Please leave me, mother,’ he said, ‘darling mother . . . I want to be alone. You will understand. . . . If I could have any one it would be you !’

And I left him. What he had been as a boy he was as a man. He had taken his troubles hardly then. He took them hardly now. And his sorrows came to him through love now, as they did then.

I went to the wide landing to watch, from the window, the day break and to keep vigil with Dick. And as I watched I thought of my children and of their children. My Claudia was married. Her strength had grown stronger in gentleness, as I had thought it would. I had lived to see my Patricia married, for which I had prayed. It was unlikely I should live to see Bounce’s wedding, and Bounce married was a picture so ridiculous that it dissolved in tears of laughter. . . .

Then from looking forward I looked back. In my long life I had known great love ; I had greatly loved. But the time had come when I knew that if the door I had once wished left ajar opened, I should pass through it unafraid. And those of my children who love their husbands will

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understand that the separation has been over long, and will not grieve for me in my happiness.

As the dark night gave way to the dim, grey dawn I seemed to come right up to that closed door. I put out my hands and gently I pushed it. It was fast shut. Over the surface of the door I ran my hands, and I found that on the inside of the door there was no latch. I knew then that it could only be opened from the Other Side, that only by violence can *we* open it, and I was content to wait. There might still be something for me to do.

There was. A pair of arms were round my neck—pink-sleeved arms—and Putts said, 'Grannie Patts, what *are* you doing?'

I could not tell him I was lost in self-pity—revelling in it!

'You promised to tuck me up and you never came and the night is gone. It is morning. . . . Look!'

I looked. It was morning, and in the distance I heard the schoolroom door open and shut.

'Grannie Patts, do you hear me speaking to you? Twice I've spoken.'

'Yes, darling darling.'

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'Well, are you going to tuck me up like you promised?'

'Of course I am, and perhaps, Putts, I shall dance at your wedding.'

'*Me?*' said Putts scornfully, 'catch *me* marrying.'

There was a pause; Putts was thinking.

'Grannie Patts, Bounce says people *can* have a wedding cake without being married. They can't, *can* they?'

'They can eat a wedding cake, but not have it.'

'Not a whole one, can they? But what's the diffrence?'

'Ask Bounce.'

'She's in bed.'

'Wait till morning.'

'It is,' he said triumphantly, pointing to the east.

'Well, what's to be done, Putts?'

'*You* say . . . I would *rather* you,' and he laid his little face against mine and straightway all wounds were healed.

'You want me then, Putts?' I said, putting my arms round him.

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‘How d’you mean?’ he asked, wrinkling his nose, hating, man-like, to be made to show his feelings.

‘You love me, Putts?’ I asked, ashamed.

‘Of course I do,’ he wriggled away. Then coming back he put his arm through mine, ‘Next to mummy . . . most of ev’ry one in the whole world . . . except daddy and baby and all the others.’

And with that I was hugely content.

A completely happy woman can be a wife, may be a mother, but must be a grandmother . . . if possible to Putts.